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When Parliaments Fail

*A Synthetic View
from the Gallery*

By

A SYMPATHISER



*CALCUTTA & SIMLA
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PREFACE.

An old friend has asked me to provide a Preface to this book. What qualifications I may have for so doing, I at least have entirely failed to discover, beyond the fact that the happenings all over the world during the last seven years have led me to a similar conclusion as that at which he arrives in this book. Still he has pressed me to write a Preface to it and accordingly I comply.

The descriptions given of what has been, and is, happening in the various Parliaments of Europe may, probably will, be deprecated as cynical or exaggerated. To me they seem substantially true and accurate, bearing out his conclusions and driving home with sinister emphasis the question which forms the book's title: *When Parliaments Fail?*

They are failing undoubtedly and that badly, not in one country alone but everywhere. And they are failing because human nature is still far more animal than human: that is, far more impelled and governed by passions and desires than by reason and thought. The ape and the tiger are still stronger and more prominent in men in the

mass than is the divine spark that none the less glows within.

But of what use is it to reiterate such well-worn truisms, and to emphasise them in regard to the Parliaments of the world?

For those at least who believe—or hope—that man is divine as well as animal, it would seem to serve this purpose. Once a man sees and realises what is wrong and how it is wrong, the first, often the most important step, has been taken towards putting it right.

But what bearing has it on India? Our India is just entering on democratic and parliamentary development and one hopes her guiding *intelligentsia*, especially the younger ones, may mark, learn and inwardly digest the lessons, which this survey of the position now becoming so marked in Europe, is well calculated to impress upon them.

Granted that it is not easy to learn from the mistakes of other folk; still one *can* so learn, while the effort to learn and to put in practice is itself well worth the making.

One might perhaps sum up the situation of government in general throughout the world somewhat in this wise. There appear to be three possible alternatives and three only. On one side there is Autocracy,

whether of the proletariat as in Russia, of the Fascist type as in Italy, or the old Kaiser type as in Germany before the war. At the opposite extreme is sheer Anarchy: whether of Nihilistic violence or the babbling confusion, inefficiency, bad administration, bribery and corruption into which the author shows the Parliaments of the world to be drifting with uncomfortable rapidity.

Between the two extremes lies Constitutionalism: whether Monarchical or Republican. But this form of Government is always, and must necessarily be, in a state of more or less unstable equilibrium, its relative stability and continuance depending on the balance of mind, the self-control, the self-discipline of the politicians composing the democratic chamber in the particular country concerned. If, as the author points out in his concluding chapter, the politicians can subordinate their own selfishness and their immediate party interests to the general welfare and stability of the whole, then Parliamentary Government seems on the whole to be the best of the possible alternatives.

But unless the politicians can rise to, and maintain themselves on the whole at, such a level, then inevitably the Government must

transform itself into some form of autocracy, after passing through a longer or shorter period of Anarchy and confusion.

Such is the lesson to which this little book points. It remains to be seen whether men in general and India in particular will pay heed to it.

For India has entered upon a phase of rapid change and transformation which now must necessarily work itself out to the end.

The course of the next few years will probably decide the issue. The outcome will ultimately be decided of course by the character—or, better perhaps, the nature—of the human units composing the nation or in particular of those units who constitute the more intelligent and better educated classes of the population. And it is to them that this book seems more especially to be addressed, for in their hands lies the future of India.

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CHAPTER I.

When Parliaments Fail to Function:

1. *When Parliament fail to function.*
2. *Work and worry.*
3. *Interrogations and interpellations.*
4. *Scenes, incidents and accidents.*

I. INTRODUCTORY.

“When parliaments fail to function” is a contingency which may well fill with horror the over-responsive, unpolitical, public mind. It will thereafter apprehend a dire state of affairs continuous with anarchy, grazing on red ruin. It will fervently wish such national calamities never to occur.

Parliaments are, in sober fact, to a large degree, delicate machines, which the human element easily may, and frequently does, throw out of gear. This human element may be diversified: caprice, ambition, lust for power, party feeling, panic, prejudice may, in various permutations and combinations, enter into that human factor. More often, a mere accident may upset the balance of such machines. In the capricious, unforeseen and unforeseeable course of a so-styled debate, deliberation may entail discussion; discussion may lead on to digression and further digression; an irrelevant remark or aside or interjection may open the valve to ill-suppressed party feeling; passions may flare up; and in the turmoil, for a good long while, parliament may cease to function.

The running years have so far failed to import peace and harmony into the perturbed parliaments.

of Europe. They have worked and worried: worked a little, perhaps not enough; but worried certainly and disproportionately more. And worry, now, is failure. For whatever the label or synonym or euphemism you give it, worry is worry—waste of time, temper, energy. It is bad enough for the private individual who can nevertheless with relative buoyancy and ease recoup his energy, recover his temper, make up for lost time. But in parliament such triple waste may be trebly disastrous, and the disaster may certainly be real if not realised at once. For a nation's time, its temper, its energy are the three vehicles of political progress which it unreservedly places, for good or ill, for use, abuse or disuse, at the service of its parliamentary delegate. He is in an invisible sense its nation-builder, and what builder may afford to misuse his tools? But when a sitting is suspended and parliament has ceased to function, we reluctantly infer that the builder has "downed" tools and walked out.

Evidently he is not satisfied. What workman is? Entirely within his rights, he is dissatisfied and he shows it.

Interrogation and interpellation are the two most obvious and facile modes of anticipating and expressing dissatisfaction, right or wrong. These are processes which in the fierce heat of a parliamentary duel evoke any or all emotions from frenzied joy to acute distress. It is playing with passion.

Generally at this stage there may be enacted impromptu scenes and incidents, not to speak of accidents, which the lay unpolitical mind does not

willingly associate with processes of explanatory reasoning or calm deliberation. They occur and recur without ostensible cause, without rhyme or reason. That, anyhow, is the verdict of those who have elected and sent the delegate, at great cost, to the parliament-house. And the average elector may not be over-intelligent, but he always has the last word, and must be respected.

The estranging, obstructive effect of such scenes, incidents and accidents in the different parliaments of Europe merits more than passing notice. Only after examining and analysing that effect will it be possible for us to answer the profoundly searching and disturbing question: Is a parliament doing its duty by its people?

CHAPTER II.

In France:

1. *The French Chamber.* 2. *"An interpellation is in progress, Sir!"* 3. *Cheers and counter-cheers; shouts and counter-shouts.* 4. *When arguments are no arguments.* 5. *The final clash.* 6. *A suspended sitting.* 7. *A resumed sitting.* 8. *Idle interruptions.* 9. *Postponements.* 10. *Delaying propositions.* 11. *Misleading propositions.* 12. *Puzzling propositions.* 13. *Provocative propositions.* 14. *The Master of the House.*

Observe and inspect the French Chamber of Deputies. What a symbolic site and approach!

The clamorous avenues of the City's fevered life converge upon the big, open Place of Concord, commingle and are then no more. The City's surge is drowned in the buzz of a thousand automobiles, scattered moth-like over that vast space. Away over yonder, across the wide river stands the Temple of Political Virtue—a classic dome, chaste, sedate, awesome. This is the parliament-house of France, the repository of the Rights of Man.

The main portal is barred. You wonder why? Liberty—or is it Law?—in steel helm and voluminous drapery, in severe contrast to the classic nudity of the friezes in the background, stands right there with uplifted finger in solemn, symbolic guard. The finger warns: Who sees? Who cares? Perhaps it is too high. And the friezes in chiselled stone above and around, whatever they may imply, are decidedly chilling. You pass on.

You betake yourself to the side entrance, and so on to the back-stairs. A bumpkin in smock brushes past you. You are intrigued. Is it a repairing mason, or is it a detective? Or can it be, dismal alternative, a duped voter in search of his delegate and vowing vengeance? The species is not extinct.

Up ponderous flights of steps you go—you are impelled along by some secret force. On the way you pass the landings. Here little groups, in twos and threes, of anxious faces encounter you. Watch the one nearest. Is it inner agony or outer boredom writ large on massive features? Perhaps the “great friend” is in inaccessible mood. Perhaps the “little friend” is otherwise engaged. You wonder “Murderers,” “cut-throats,” “crooks” or some such rude sounds shouted far away, as if in another world, break in upon your wonderment. You pass on, past officials in black languorously caressing their silver neck-chains.

Shouts and counter-shouts. You collapse into your corner in the Undistinguished Strangers’ Gallery. Cries of shame or good fame, cheers and jeers alternate. The Extreme Left is on the war-path. The Near Left does not know its own mind and is patiently lost in contemplation of its own distress. The Centre is wobbly. The Right is stunned into silence by the onslaught.

A kindly neighbour observes to you, superfluously: “An interpellation is in progress, Sir!”

That is putting it too coldly and is emphatically wrong. The interpellation came to a sudden stop long ago. It was just killed.

For the moment, speaker and his interrupter and their audience are lost in the tortuous cross-currents of dialectic. Expletives and invectives are flung about and bandied like confetti. A little irrelevancy leads to a big irrelevancy and the big one to a bigger one. Mr. Interpellator is frozen into silence; or is it cunningly that he affects indifference? He does not count.

He ceased to count a good long while ago. He has friends, more zealous than wise, and it is they who are prolonging his stay in the tribune. One such indiscreet friend with a chance interjection rouses the Right and Centre to fury. President and tribune at once recede into the background. They might have been dropped into oubliettes just where they stood. For they are clean out of the picture. Now interruptions are met with interruptions and a champion interrupter from the Right or Centre takes up the gage and explosively delivers himself of a diatribe against the interjector from the Left and all his tribe. He fumes, gesticulates, shouts.....and loses his voice. Centre and Left cheer frantically as his impromptu oration comes to that undignified end. What was he saying or going to say you could not catch; nor could they. But he is one of them, and whatever he has said or left unsaid is enough for them, thank you. And don't you interrupt or disturb the entranced gallery with idle questions.

When the last ripple of the last round of hectic applause to the accompaniment of waving arms and tossing hair and flashes from the heads of the hairless has quite died away, the gentleman from the Left tries another taunt, hurls another

abuse, and claps in self-applause at the presumed hit. And the handful at his end clap with him in chorus.

Dumbfounded the bulk of the house looks pathetically on, it is obviously distressed. It is just inarticulate in its helplessness.

The President—yes, there is or was a president somewhere—re-emerges into prominence with the tinkling of his bell and the toc-toc-toc of his stick. Perhaps, in fact most probably, he was ringing the bell and tapping the table with his stick all the while, during every minute after minute that the rounds of party applause reverberated through the hall. But his bell remained inaudible and himself invisible. It must have been a thankless job ringing an inaudible bell. But he re-arrests the attention of the hall. The amphitheatre is again at his feet; he is again at its head. The ten long minutes, or was it longer, are finally over, during which he was cut out or frozen out of office.

Entry in the record of progress: Order restored, President re-controls the situation.

The President appeals to the orator in the tribune to restrain his wild men on the Left. The orator resumes his manuscript oration meekly.

There are times when arguments are no arguments, when worthy occupants of the tribune cease to argue, or when they argue not to convince but to score a flashy party triumph amid general discomfiture. At all times arguments are arguments, elusive, boring, incomplete. How sweet and fascinating to drop them for a moment, to turn aside, to go for an admission, or a failing, or

the personality of a member of the group or party you wish to trounce. And how piquant if the member, you wish to show as sinning, sinned when in power. You now quote him against his own party, against himself. That brings a sober ex-governmental, perhaps mildest of men and best of citizens and ever a pillar of propriety, unerringly and undeniably to his feet.

This releases another storm. For he, a fury in black and white, sees red, rushes into the arena, insists on being heard, and will not be denied. He is clamant; he must ride the storm he has released, his own storm; he must nail the lie to the mast; he must be right with his own men, at peace with his own conscience. He must come to word, right there and then. He must.

But the tribune is occupied, and the right of speech with another. And the president and his stick and his bell appeal, each in a characteristic way but all frantically, for Order, Order. Slowly, surely, finally that appeal goes home. The president promises right of immediate speech as soon as the orator in the tribune has completed his oration. And the roused one inevitably submits.

While the roused one and the presiding one are settling their differences, the last say, the last word, the last laugh in the matter has all along been with the be-spectacled, pale-faced, sly occupant of the tribune. "Wait a moment," you almost hear him chuckling and saying to himself over his closely penned manuscript, "Wait and see and count how many more of you frogs will be jumping up in the air in the near bye and bye, you croakers!" Singularly sweet, if also sinister, must

have been his long soliloquy, while the order-maker and the order-breaker were composing their quarrel to the bewilderment of the whole house and the thronged gallery.

The manuscript reader resumes his reading in the same un-personal, unyielding monotone as formerly, as if he were reading a lesson in a classroom. Charge after charge is read out, as if by a clerk in a court of law. The silence in the house grows deeper, heavier, oppressive and ominous. The modest one, whose voice permeates the hall in placid reaches, was for counting just how many more members jump to their feet in protest: one, two, three. The reality surpasses his wildest guess.

The whole house is in an uproar, vociferating, gesticulating to the tintinnabulation of a bell, and the toc-toc-toc of a stick somewhere in mid-air. The din defies understanding.

Eventually stick and bell outpace and outlast the cries and gestures of dissent. The presiding one is adamant. Previously he might have been for turning one's face away in scorn and lofty indignation from provocative statements utterly divorced from truth, but now he will exact the full penalty. The gentleman in the tribune must either un-mean what he says, or un-say what he means.

The gentleman in the tribune proposes to do neither. "For, look you, my friends!" he says, or might say, with elfish joy, "I have put it in black and white after much mature consideration!"

How much midnight oil or current went to mature those considerations is a matter which does not intrigue the house, but the expiatory

explanation is still withheld and delay only strains its patience to breaking-point.

The gentleman in the tribune is obdurate. He will not yield. Evidently he is working for a crisis, and the crisis does overtake him. In a voice almost breaking with passion, the sorely tried president takes disciplinary action: he reprimands him, censures him, suspends him. And with him, the sitting is likewise suspended, not in silence but in terrible confusion, for already the uproar is deafening. The house is like a lusty babe trying the full power of its lungs, but technically it has dissolved, and therefore the less said about it the better.

After an interval which looks practically unlimited the house reassembles. It is in a more chastened mood, almost penitent. You wonder how long this virtuous phase is going to last.

Another delegate from the Left takes possession of the tribune. He is heard in patience, as he speaks what is common knowledge. In an easy canter he presents cold colourless facts. In passing he has a fling at what he witheringly terms secret diplomacy of the governmentals. Their leader is promptly on his feet, claiming the right to explain. He is allowed to do so, and in sum makes a long statement from his desk.

The statement, if that is the right name to give to what degenerates into a series of disjointed remarks in reply to discursive interjections, is scarcely allowed a chance to be heard, seized and digested. Friends applaud zealously: enemies protest mechanically; eventually, all rely on reading it in the morning paper. This, according to

its political creed, may give it prominent headlines and a place of honour, or it may sandwich it in between a tonic and a toothpaste, strongly recommending either. But we digress.

The volley of interjections rises to a crescendo. Another lusty-lunged babe from the infants' class of the Left takes the quietus. For he is formally castigated with bell, book and stick, and after a Parthian shot, which rakes up ancient history and shakes to activity skeletons reposing in his accusers' cupboards, he bundles himself out of the council-hall.

The council proceeds still more animatedly. Another irrepressible jack-in-the-box adorning the Left indulges in unrehearsed effects; his gestures and shouts attract or distract general attention. He is pulled up by the president. "But it is all so amusing to us on this side!" is his apology or explanation for the noise. "Amuse yourself silently!" shouts back the champion of law and order.

Interruptions to the placid flow of debate may take various forms and proceed from strange quarters. They are puzzlingly sudden and kaleidoscopically new. At rare times, they are a treat and express the sense of the house when a prosy old boy is stepping on the gas and exceeding time and speed limit alike.

Self-sufficing iconoclasts in the hall, usually seated or standing—more often standing—in the extreme wings of the hall, will take the infelicitous course of punctuating proceedings not to their liking with shouts of "Down with this," "Down with

that," the subject of their curt condemnation being any body or thing, from bourgeois to kings.

But such interruptions are idle; they are, at root, confessions of failure. At best, they imply that the impatient fellow is anxious to put the house wise in the minimum of words, to contribute effectively to the debate at the psychological moment there and then, but he can find no better means to serve him than a cat-call or a party cry. They do no real harm, but much depends on the temper of the house, and on the provocation given. There is always a live menace to the debate: it may be side-tracked or even definitely derailed.

More subtle are the moves for or against postponement. The basic object they are calculated to serve may be ulterior, indirect, remote. A simple harmless question may entail declaration of a comprehensive far-reaching policy, which may be all the more difficult or distasteful to make, if no such policy exists. Or, maybe, a departed leader chalked out in dotted lines the rough trend of such a policy. In a rare exercise of discretion he had refrained from giving it body, shape, form. He has departed. His capacious mantle has fallen on others, but he has inadvertently taken his thinking-cap with him. Or his mantle has fallen to the ground and there is none to succeed him. Urgently, the party may be called upon to declare itself, to vote. It has already deliberated, cogitated, indulged in that sport of autocrats, a camera sitting. The imperative need of the hour is postponement, a postponement at all costs.

And a postponement is voted, voted by the heavy voice of the undecided ones. They are so

many; the world itself often seems full of them. But the decided ones are furious. Extreme Left and Extreme Right always know their own minds, and often read into the minds of others. They join hands successfully to defeat the centre, or all comers. A queer combination; a strange galley-ful of ill-assorted die-hards. It is an accidental turn of the kaleidoscope, amusing if unsuccessful.

But postponements are radically wrong and indefensible, however successful the vote that carries them through. Then come in *delaying* propositions, which have all the essence of a postponement with none of its nudity. As one such, it may be seriously proposed to withhold credits until the recipient has sufficiently cleared his motives. Or it may be still more seriously proposed to refer the matter to the League of Nations. Or it may be finally proposed to appoint a committee of the house to take supreme charge of the whole affair. This, if accepted, would mean a confession of want of policy and a pooling of helplessness, but the bitter pill will be silver-coated with the pleasing promise that thereby a united front was going to be presented to the country and the world. At times, in short, there is no alternative too absurd for consideration as a *delaying* proposition.

But *delaying* propositions are usually barren of results. There is more fascination with prospect of final success in a proposition which misleads. Such *misleading* propositions secure a delay or postponement without the odium or trouble attendant on direct solicitation. The

mechanism of a misleading proposition is very simple.

Raise a false issue, the falser the better, and persevere in it. Somebody is sure to be incensed, perhaps also implicated, feel himself aggrieved, and lo, he plunges into a heated but futile discussion blindly. If that somebody was somehow, somewhere in a position of authority, you may rely on him being touchy enough to call for instant satisfaction, to hurl prudence to the winds, and finally to help you out of your dilemma by creating a first-class scene.

But false issues are double-edged weapons, or, differently pictured, boomerangs, which may return and strike you back. The aggrieved one has superior knowledge, and may also have superior skill. He may press you to define your own attitude, a hateful thing to do when you do not know it clearly yourself and are obviously in a hurry. What is still more distasteful, the rest of the be-mused house may join in the pressure put upon you.

It is at this stage that *puzzling* propositions come in useful. When hard-pressed for relief and compelled to define your position, make full use of negative extremes, give free rein to your imagination. Your position is not this, and it is not that, so you assert as you wander leisurely from one negative extreme to another. The right mean, if any, will manifest itself in course of time to such as are interested enough to know it. But who is? And who cares? Anyhow, your object is gained. For you have not committed yourself, but wriggled out of an uncomfortable corner in the debate.

But maybe you just fail to wriggle out of a tight corner, and are held at bay. All is fair in love and war, perhaps also in debate. You assume to yourself the benefit of that doubt, and with a prayer to international democracy you throw out a *provocative* proposition. This is a challenge to the whole house. It may treat your provocation with disdain, but it rarely does; it could treat it with lofty dignity, were some fool of a busybody not to rush in with a skeleton out of your cupboard. Some such fool does drag in that skeleton. You explain, but alas! do not convince the house, not even yourself. They shout. Your friends shout back. Then ensues pandemonium for a while, probably also a scuffle or a mere exchange of missiles.

The president intervenes. He has to run with the hare in the shape of liberty of speech, and hunt with the hounds in the shape of the country's multifarious interests. He does both. He catches the intemperate orator in the toils of his own excesses, and he trips him up. Then follow the habitual censure and suspension. That much to the debit side; on the credit side, a valuable postponement.

But it would be extremely injudicious to appraise results by personal or even party debit and credit. While the suspended one or his party may say to himself or itself after an all-night sitting: One thing attempted, another done, has earned a day's repose, what has parliament or the country gained?

It would be an instructive experiment in group-psychology to take the vote on the interpellation

just before the debate opens and then to retake it in the usual way, when its tempestuous career comes to an end. The two votes may just be identical, or just not so.

If identical, the whole nerve-racking performance shall have principally been in vain. As to its incidental effects such as allowing the government of the day to face hostile criticism, to explain a difficult situation, to take the public into its confidence, etc., etc., they could all have been easily secured from the relative serenity and seclusion of an arm-chair in the cabinet. Why, then, go through, or even impassively assist at, an unedifying spectacle in the shape of a public disputation?

But maybe the two votes, taken before and after the long-winded debate, may just not be identical. The difference calls for explanation. How to explain it otherwise than as follows?

Mr. Delegate has come prepared, or so he imagines, for attack or defence as the case may be. He is conscious of his own strength; he can make a shrewd guess as to the reach of the other fellow's right arm. He would be singularly lacking in political vanity, were he not buoyed up by an almost arrogant self-assurance, and the feeling: "I know all the guy has to say." But—and this notable exception must be made—he is perfectly unprepared for the lightning flashes of invectives, expletives, charges, counter-charges, interjections, full of sound and fury and signifying something trivial. He is obviously caught unawares, indeed swept off his feet, by the concatenation of false and futile issues raised. But at the moment, when the presiding one, a pillar of impartiality, may

himself be a-quiver with justful indignation, Mr. Delegate is too human to glimpse through the falsity or futility of the false and futile issues surging up from all sides. The heart of the matter, on which he has to make up his own mind and thereby make history, is left leagues behind. The overwhelming consideration which decides him to take the plunge into this or into that urn may be a masterpiece of irrelevancy: an unfortunate epithet, an acrimonious disclosure, the action of the president himself in allowing too much or too little rope to the interpellator or his party, an unseemly suspension and the oppressivè rights and wrongs of it, and so forth. After due lapse of time and at leisure, he may succeed in winnowing the true issue from the false issues that beset it, but in the heat of the debate, or just after, the nerve-weary delegate will record a vote reflecting anything but the working of his calm mind, a hasty vote perhaps and recorded with all the impetuosity of a boy expecting release from school.

Often the house is thin, and the inference is obvious: The bulk of the delegates, at least the members of the party in power, are not participating in the debate at all, but otherwise engaged in the refreshment or retiring room. They thereby feel that they are letting the obvious take its course. But they promptly return to the urns when the bell goes. So their vote is cast independently of the debate, and would have been precisely the same had the parties not stage-managed a debate at all. This brings us back to the first case and completes the circle of enquiry.

Thus, the voting is either on a false, fallacious issue, or on a practically undiscussed issue. In either case the debate has been in vain.

For the reason or remedy we must revert to the picture of the schoolboy in the schoolroom. When boys are playing truant or squabbling among themselves, it is not so much that discipline is in abeyance as that the master has failed to hold their attention, to mould their minds, to grip them hard. In the debate-house it is not the president who is the master of the house. He is only a policeman, a chucker-out. No, the real master of the house is elsewhere. He is in the orator's tribune; and he changes his voice, his personality, his appeal with every change of orator. For he is—is he not?—the orator himself. In a house full of delegates of more or less the same calibre, when its strong ones have been played out or exposed or saddled with an embarrassing past, and its new ones are still unbroken or have not yet risen to their full stature, the course of debate will be marked sooner by scenes, which neutralise its effect, or by false issues which confuse it, than by masterly arguments which hold hard, persuade or dissuade, by the play of powerful personalities, by the force of great minds. Unless and until such arise and take their rightful place—and a Demosthenes is not born every day—there is bound to continue unrelieved the tyranny of mediocrity.

CHAPTER III.

In England:

1. *The Heart of St. Stephen's and The Palace of Westminster.*
2. *The statue at the gate and the painting on the wall.*
3. *En Route for the Undistinguished Strangers' Gallery.*
4. *The telepathic debate.*
5. *"We are on the edge of a precipice"—fiction and fact.*
6. *The vision in gray and his moral elevation.*
7. *The two speakers and two parties.*
8. *A Lethean atmosphere: "So this is what they're paid for!"*
9. *The fruitless debate.*
10. *Question time.*
11. *The innocent parent question and the wicked supplementaries.*
12. *The barrier of caste, inside the House.*
13. *The House of Commons, Incorporated.*
14. *Civil Servants All!*
15. *There is no parliament in England!*
16. *The triumph of Suavity.*

The heart of St. Stephen's in the City of Westminster lies between two parallel lines—the rigid line of a roadway and the sinuous line of a waterway. The water-front is washed and lapped by the barge-laden putty-tinted river; the road-facade is agitated by the swirl of raucous, asthmatic, smoky, auto-vehicles.

Between these parallel lines move the wheels within wheels of the world's only empire's destiny, or so you imagine, most probably wrongly! What these parallel lines enclose is at first glimpse bizarre. Without the formality of a facade or approach or introduction or By-your-leave, a dark gray oblong construction rises into the equally dark gray heaven. This is the Palace of Westminster. It looks so absurdly unhappy in its new-world surroundings which ill accord with its austere dignity. No wonder, it shoots straight up

like an arrow, as if closing its ears to the screech of traffic on the road, and shutting its eyes to the squelch of smoke on and across the water. The Palace of Westminster takes you a long way down centuries back in time and millenia back in spirit.

Here, and better than here nowhere,—if fortune smile on you, good pilgrim!—you may enter, and in peace that is primeval ponder and pore over the puzzles of the day. Six hundred are doing it.

Unlike *Palais Bourbon*, its French counterpart, the Palace of Westminster has no need for idle statuary or frieze wherewith to grip and amuse or instruct the lingerer. There is a singular, almost studied, absence of decorative effect, such as may be achieved through buttress or niche, inscription, statuary or frieze. Austerity will not permit it. The interlocking quadrangles inspire awe or gloom or both.

Parallel with the roadway is a curious, bald, blatant stretch of greensward, an awkward lapse from austere grace, and vaguely out of place in St. Stephen's frown of dignity. Set in this islet of green is the effigy of a gentleman, great in history, who wears a look of solemn petrification and folds of rugged stone. He is indomitable. You just cannot afford to overlook him. For the guardian at the gate-way to the main entrance will direct you, idle thrill-seeker from a strange land, to the business-like side entrance just beyond the statue. It is the one and only statue, and you must not miss it.

You enter at a brisk pace to traverse without regret a maze of old, cold, dark, nude chambers, and then you impinge into the waiting-hall. Here

a brief halt is to be made. The long, narrow panels engage your attention. Paintings in this hall of whispers come as a pleasing surprise. One particularly stands out. You crane your neck anticipating some stirring scene in the history of parliamentary institutions, some heroic event in depicting which the painter's eye has in a fine frenzy rolled. But no, the reality is just otherwise. It depicts the hasty and unceremonious exit from the House of three gentlemen robed in intense black, slipping unperceived into a row-boat off a back-door with the clear intention of having themselves furtively conveyed across the water. You guess: surely a trio of Guy Fawkeses, who having failed to fire the House are fleeing from just retribution. Your guess only shows how little you know the world's history.

After a preparatory pause in this forehall, you plunge into its inner recesses.

You are bound for the Undistinguished Strangers' Gallery, and your destination is not yet. As the mazes, passages, stairways multiply, you realise all the romance of intelligent expectation in your quest and persevere.

One narrow and sombre spiral stairway reminds you of another such in the Towers of Julius, not very far away. It is so constructed that the intruder coming up from below shall never be free to disengage his right arm, while the defender from above may freely swing and use his own. But all comparisons are absurdly fantastic and the thought of medieval rapiers playing over and into distinguished members' persons is one such.

You pass on and in the avalanche of new impressions the awesome stairway is forgotten. It has led you to a sort of overhead bridge connecting with another block of buildings. How like the Bridge of Sighs in Venice! Here, indeed, might the unseated or unseatable ones foregather, and sigh for the House that is not theirs.

Another long passage and you debouch on the Undistinguished Strangers' Gallery, and glide down the middle gangway. In two hops, you feel, you will be in your seat. The hops are slow like a retarded motion-picture, and how noisy! For, a debate is in progress!

To pick up the threads of that debate means a steady effort of the imagination, eye, ear. A distinguished member—they are all distinguished—is making a passionate semi-telepathic appeal. He is shouting in whispers. Could you only see his face you might do some lip-reading. But, as it happens, his head and half the torso have been clean cut off, and you just see a trunk on two legs swaying ominously on the edge of a precipice.

It is a precipice! The hard-looking benches rise, tier on tier, within a minimum of floor-space; the steps are so narrow and precarious; the seats are so broad and destitute of arms or other accessories; no protective, useful desk intervenes between a distinguished member's eloquence and a false step; no friendly tribune is provided whence he could perorate in peace; not even a stand or clasp or folder for his papers, which dissolve into flying leaves and add to the air of general confusion—the wonder of all wonders is that the distinguished member, if at all carried away by fiery

eloquence or righteous indignation, does not slip off his precarious perch and drop into the oubliette between the bench behind and the bench below him.

But eloquence is evidently *vieux jeu*, a played-out game; and indignation is cheap any day. Both are detrimental to the conduct of good business, and short of bigger, deeper oubliettes, every obstacle is interposed to prevent distinguished members from indulging in either. Such, however, is the perversity of human nature, especially of human nature in high places, that it cannot sense and respect its own limitations. The distinguished member continues in a peculiarly acid tone of voice:

"We are on the edge of a precipice." He is, you gather from the voluminous agenda sheets thrust into your arms by a helpful attendant, discouraging on silk duties.

"We are on the edge of a precipice...." he psalmodises, a political Jeremiah, and will not be denied. And he rocks like a Long Island rocker. Word and gesture could not be welded together more dramatically.

"We are on the edge of a precipice...." he roars, and his prophet eye foresees the death-blow to industry, the ensuing ominous unemployment, the strangling of foreign commerce, the depraving reaction on feminine taste, the headlong plunge into ruin, red ruin,—should the silk duties be voted and enforced. And he sways and swings still more violently. The edge of a precipice—his own predicament.

What a powerfully moving appeal! Surely it will go home? No. Just watch the other distinguished members and the undistinguished, almost irreverent, attitudes they have struck. The front-benchers are the most hardened offenders. Having enough elbow-room and leg-space across the rectangular floor of the House, they adjust their supple limbs into restful poses, and close their eyes under the brim of top-hats as if deeply contemplative, and finally doze off. Some restless souls will converse in whispers. But most fidgety and pitiable are the back-benchers. They have just got to keep awake and listen intently, unless they elect to slip off their uncomfortable seats to either side, or down into the gap below.

It is the back-benchers, then, who provide the most eloquence, the most denunciation, the most heat, the most movement. At present, this movement expend itself in spasmodic changes from one uncomfortable posture into another.

Another back-bencher succeeds the one on the precipice. You are more fortunate. You can see him completely. He is a vision in gray. He wears a halo of gray locks. In a less thankless age and more generous clime he would have been statufied in his lifetime. Here he has only a halo, a more or less permanent halo, attached to his august head. What a moral elevation it must give him!

But all moral elevation is lost when he too joins in the general denunciation of the duties. He reads deeper into the duties. He unveils the inner motives, the subtle schemes of the little men drest in a little brief authority. Clairvoyantly he

sees these Liliputians with a network of protective duties manacled that giant Gulliver, "British Industry."

He then talks of hill-tops silhouetted against the gray sky with a solitary enemy figure dominating them; he depicts the thousand others toiling up their reverse slopes whereof that figure is just an advance guard.

He does not sway. He is used to firmer footing. But what does he say? And why does he say it? And Echo answers, Why?

And so this debate, like a back-broken serpent on the grass, drags on its weary, wayward course across the green floor of the House. Choose any moment, and at that moment you will find just two distinguished members evince any interest: The first is the orator, the vocal one, because he will; and the second is Mr. Speaker, the strong, silent one, because he must. These apart, there is no third to evince any interest, however deeply he may have been stirred by the course of debate. This ebbs and flows like a landlocked shallow water, but such effects are superficial.

The stern reality behind any debate is the voting strength of the parties. And whatever the labels they may bear, probably out of vanity, the number of such parties is always, and strictly, two:—the party in power and the party out of it, or the Haves and the Havenots. And calling it practical politics, the band of Liliputians, on the Right side of the House and conscious of their superior voting strength, safely ignore a wilderness of Gullivers within the House and without. Visions in gray, however blameless their past or

candid their future, may grow or fade; the votes obey only the stern logic of arithmetic; and legislation, sorry jade, the chain of votes.

In this Lethean atmosphere the wonder at any time is not, Who is speaking? but Why? "So this is what they are paid for!" observes to himself, but quite aloud, an irreverent cynic within hearing. There is no time or inclination for you to undertake such stock-taking as is suggested by the wag in the gallery. The whole House is in a somnolent mood, and the gallery is not immune from the general predisposition to *dolce far niente*.

The debate comes to an inconsequent end as it began, and the result of the voting is a foregone conclusion. It is essentially decided by the absent ones who rush into the breach at the last moment. They have not profited from the debate; who has?

Let us now turn to the House in a livelier mood. Interpellation is the call-to-arms in the French *Chambre*; Interrogation is the chief diversion of the English House.

Any grievance, local or national, can be aired, exposed, attacked in two ways or from two ends: from the bottom or from the top. The former is the more effective. The local authority concerned may accept the force of your remonstrance or protest, and redress the grievance. That failing, or independently, you start at the top by putting a question to the whole government. You alienate all the authorities from top to bottom; you fail to elicit the desired information; and you convert a sober parliament into a most unwilling and inefficient

information bureau. So converted, parliament has evidently failed to function.

Question time is very lively time in the House, which contrives to muster strong and whip up flagging energies for the occasion. A helpful janitor, as you entered, has pushed a sheaf of questions under your arm. While the telepathic debate is in progress, you have ample leisure to examine the series of questions.

Some assume extra gravity by beginning with a star. All end in crosses. It is an altogether unintelligible game of stars and crosses. As to subjects they range at random and cover all degrees of importance and unimportance. You wonder: Why set all the complicated machinery of a vast empire in motion for the attainment of information which would have been more amply and quickly conveyed to the questioner by the third clerk of the bureau concerned? Such naive wonder on your part overlooks the ulterior object served in putting a question. It serves as a dynamic reminder to the voter that his distinguished member is alive to his interests and is doing his duty by him.

More often an innocent-looking question is designed to inveigle the government spokesman into an incautious declaration of policy. Usually this worthy is an assistant or substitute or deputy, and should he blab too much or rush in where his angelic Chief feared to tread, the latter can safely throw him over. But such a contingency arises rarely. The Chief's understudies, like all understudies, exaggerate the discretion which is the better part of valour, and cultivate a brevity of speech as well as thought.

himself in full approval. But denizens of the wilderness are pachydermatous and incorrigible.

A general information bureau may answer questions more fully, simply and decently, but it will be obviously lacking in surprises.

Scenes, incidents, idiosyncrasies apart, distinguished members have every inducement to pull together, to conduct affairs in the House on sound business lines, to co-operate with each other in heart, deed and spirit. Are they not all one hopeful band of Civil Servants? Civil Servants, all? Paid Servants of the State, paid to run the State exactly as a railroad's employees run a railroad, or an incorporated company's staff manage that incorporated company?

The House of Commons, Inc., is a corporation which deals very handsomely with its hopeful, faithful, trusty servants. Let them during its service develop the civic sense, the business *flair*, the imperial instinct, and the vista of prospect that opens out before them is one inaccessible in his wildest dreams of bliss to the down-at-heels, out-at-elbows, bibulous, garrulous, gesticulating Continental deputy. Committees, commissions, juries, in a word public bodies charged with a task of enquiry or construction or administration, in the innumerable units of a world-empire, offer unrivalled opportunities for resolute service. Where the imperial instinct is strong, a subaltern governorate within the wide marches of the empire will foster that Promethean glow. There he will rise on stepping-stones of his dead self to higher things; there he will qualify as empire-builder, as Pro-consul... A prancing Pro-consul, someone said

ecstatically. Very true! What a canvas! But that way lies tragedy. Long years ago he set out in glory, and now he returns with gout. Milton was wrong. The last infirmity of noble minds is not ambition, it is gout.....

They manage these things execrably on the Continent. A French Deputy accepts a distant governorship far, far away; and lo! his party within and without the *Chambre* promptly outcaste him. An Italian Senator accepts a colonial satrapy, and he is pursued with jeers, as though he were the last of the untouchables.

The House of Commons, Inc., is a wonderful nursery of Healthy Imperialism, of True Citizenship of the World. The morose cynic will say: What a far cry from the old House of Commons, the free parliament of free men that it was before it went Inc., and transmuted its free men, its Commoners, its conscience-keepers, into serried ranks of Civil Servants. From that epoch onward the free Parliament of England has ceased to function. There is no Parliament in England.

There can be no useful reply to criticism like this which is wholly cynical. *Guarda e passa!*

Business is business, even if a trifle dull. The debate will take its somnolent sinuous course, and lead on somehow, somewhere. The numerical strength of uninspired voters, unshackled by mandates, will decide the legislation of the day. Questions will do no harm, if left unanswered; and probably no good, if they are. Rude words, such as "Russia," "Gallipoli," will be rebuked with silence; lapses from grace, with contempt. A clear

spirit of co-operation will inspire and elevate the whole House.

In the French *Chambre*, under the thin guise of free speech, crocodiles may gnaw at each others' tails. But here in this House there is something better than free speech. It is soft speech, fair speech, sweet speech, such as most becomes Civil Servants, who sit on revolving stools and "have the honour to be"—the triumph of suavity!

CHAPTER IV.

In Germany:

1. *One Lieutenant and ten men.* 2. *The Monument of Victory.* 3. *Trustees of the Reich.* 4. *Every colour must have its day.* 5. *Diplomatenloge.* 6. *German and English female M. P.'s.* 7. *Lady Dignity in Blue!* 8. *The business of the House.* 9. *A Grand Guignolesque Deputy.* 10. *Lady Dignity, communist!* 11. *Tame Generals.* 12. *Fiery denunciation.* 13. *"He laughs!"* 14. *Democracy in extremis: falling between two stools, monarchism and communism.* 15. *Cinderella after the ball: the mirage of monarchism.*

One lieutenant and ten men were once considered more than a match for the Imperial German Reichstag. An irate deputy once uttered a threat to bring it to its senses with one lieutenant and ten men. In those days suffragettes who adventured into the Fatherland in quest of votes for women were held up with this pathetic plea from the men: "Why, here, even we men have no votes!" But now this feeling of impotence and subjection is a mere memory, a joyfully forgotten memory. This, at least, may be placed to the credit side of the War.

Berlin's Lustgarten, or pleasure garden for the people constitutes its one and only lung. At the apex of that lung there stands, like a truncated cone, a dome-capped building with inconspicuous abutments at the sides and shiny white drives going round it. It looks eminently like a Grand Opera House, but it actually is the House of the Reichstag.

The Monument of Victory, a vision of gold and glory, used to remind the Reichstag of its vast heritage before the war. Culminating in the Tower of Victory is the Avenue of Victory with marble effigies of the devoted autocrats, who had made Prussia what she had been and was, again before the war. The Avenue of Victory was a permanent exordium to the new race of builders of the Reich drawn from the plebs of what they had inherited, what they had to hold, guard and please God! extend.

Some say these trustees of the Reich proved untrue to their trust, and unworthy of their glorious heritage, losing overnight what centuries of efficient rule had conserved and consigned to their care. Others say that the unbridled spirit of the lieutenant and ten men broke the Reich. Such are the divergent view-points of the impenitent militarist and the ardent democrat. Both are crying over spilt milk and both are wrong.

The Reichstag-house is decidedly modern in aspect, unlike the pompous *Palais Bourbon*, in France, or the mediævally-cloistered House of Commons in England. Suited to the democracy it houses, the Reichstag-house looks a thing of recent growth, like Wagnerian opera. Its *foyer*, with the wide sweep of winding stairway galleries, must surely look their best on gala nights. The fittings in crimson and gold, the *baroque* decorations, the heavy W. R.-monogrammed furniture of the boxes proclaim the lofty expectations of the designers.

But Fate has frowned severely on their grandiose designs. The ubiquitous democrat has imported into this palatial building not only the

wild spirit of liberty but also the ungainly body of democracy, of democracy of the dregs, of slumdom, of the *ghetto*. Upholstery meant for more delicate use is heavy with the sweat of Spartacus. Royal crimson is fading to invisible pink under the redder patches of post-war commotion. But there is no room for regrets. Every colour must have its day.

You slip into your royal box, called disrespectfully after those anæmic willowy creatures—diplo-mats, “Diplomatenloge.” You slip into your seat with a feeling of vacuity, your foot-fall dying on the heavy carpet and your heart almost faint from a sense of awe within you. However relentless and revengeful the present, it is the past which dominates you, oppresses you, unnerves you.

Below you, the seats are arranged in semi-circles, like the cross-section of a perfect onion. Each seat is a perfect article of commodity, with desk and shelf in front, while radial gangways, radiating from the central tribune below split up the sets of benches into more numerous divisions than the freaks of party politics can ever make at any time.

The parties’ seats are arranged from right to left, from extreme conservatism or monarchism to extreme communism or Bolshevism. The popular parties take the centre and spread themselves over to either side according to their extremer shades. But most fascinating with their vivid splashes of colour are the twenty odd ladies in brilliant attire, who have most fortunately for æsthetic effect disdained to band themselves together into any so-called Women’s Party, but have preferred to

scatter themselves at random throughout the hall. No false sense of political perspective or unduly high feeling of their vocation seems to suppress their buoyancy, or afflict them with clerkly stiffness or to squeeze them into harsh and angular tailor-mades, as is the case with their English sisters.

A sombre-suited matron here would be hard to find. The colourfully dressed ladies are the tools of destiny, the instruments of equity. For the *genius loci*, or the spirit of the place, however thwarted by that after-war incubus of democracy, must confess to feeling a warm thrill at the sight of these warm, vivid, colourful figures.

One, in particular, is dressed in resplendent blue, fold on fold, gowned like a Roman matron, and looking quite as dignified and authoritative. You cannot take your eyes off her. The weary occupant of the tribune is struggling through a long attributive phrase peculiar to involved German construction; possibly he has skipped a whole line of his manuscript, and is therefore somewhere repeating himself. But you are indulgent, and do not mind. For your curious, idle attention is pre-occupied with Lady Dignity in blue. How insolently blue silk shines forth in this gathering of "grave and reverend signiors"!

The house is not quite full, but gaps, wherever they be, are inconspicuous. The absentees could not be staying away by habit. Decidedly, these German deputies take their business more seriously than do their colleagues across the sea. Decidedly, they could not be paid for doing their work, you blandly wonder: Otherwise they would

not enthuse over it so childishly; otherwise they would have cultivated that air of beatific poise, not to say repose, which a high moral sense of labour done and wages won alone confers.

But to know is to understand. And you know that all these earnest deputies, from Deputy A to Deputy Z, are still in their swaddling clothes; that, anyhow, they have yet to get into long trousers; that, for all their aged looks and sapient ways, they only date back to 1918. They are not even Mist'ers, just Deputy A to Deputy Z. They have no tags to their names, no labels, no titles. They are not even Honourable or Distinguished. At grips with realities, they scorn to hold shadows, so they say or feel, if you could only look into their bullet-heads.

The business of the House is in full swing. A bill is in course of second or third reading. Paragraphs, unamended, or amended, or re-amended, are put to the House and voted upon. Every now and then this lively House empties itself; it flows out into the lobbies; and then it refills, each deputy returning through the door of Ayes or the door of Noes as suits his political persuasion. What an efficient mode of voting! It is easier to count upright heads walking in on two legs than a forest of crooked hands or forearms, held out at all angles and distracting the counter by their unsteadiness. But there is a pre-requisite to success: you must take your deputys\ship seriously. There is no amateurishness, miscalled sportsmanship, about your Teutonic deputy.

Now comes the speechifying. The bill flung on the floor of the House for consideration and

discussion proposes a grant of amnesty to political offenders. And serious deputies, seriously roused, do let themselves go.

Amnesty for political offenders! What a bone of contention between party and party, between a chief and his party, and among the rank and file of any party. There is hardly a political group without sympathies to extreme right or left. Hence every deputy, party or group is acutely interested in the bill.

A Social Democrat opens the ball, and leads with a clear expression of discontent with the amnesty proposed, as it does not go back enough. He complains that justice instead of being above parties and classes, had become an instrument of political oppression in the hands of one party against the others. He complains of class-justice which is the very negation of justice. He even insinuates most provocatively that French judges in Occupied Territory had been behaving with more impartiality than German judges. This plunge into anti-patriotism with a view to scoring a cheap, dialectical point rouses the two extremes of the House to fury. It is all very well for backward races to extol the blessings conferred by an alien judge or an alien magistrate, but to expect genuine Teuton flesh and blood to respond to such a call is more than the House can bear.

In a voice shaking with emotion the Vice-president appeals to the orator to restrain himself. The appeal is from time to time reinforced with further passionate appeals, but the orator is not easily controlled.

He is followed by the lady in blue. She demands amnesty for all the members of the great proletariat rotting in prison. A communist to her finger-tips, she is an easy first in violence of speech. She calls German justice a soulless means of holding the German workman down, and the amnesty bill a special instrument to operate the release of monarchist law-breakers. She demands amnesty all round. She even threatens to bring the deputies to her own way of thinking through the Unions' Executives, which would apply the necessary pressure.

She speaks with a wealth of words and gestures, in rich, ringing tones that reduce the House to impotent silence. Her denunciation of the powers-that-be is electrical in effect. But it is all so unnatural. The House does not seem to mind it, and it is soon forgotten. But it is extremely doubtful if the House would have stood such provocation from a mere male.

Communism is evidently very vocal in the House but it is not very effective or strong. And the strange sight of a very refined-looking, matronly lady in gaudy silk, preaching high communism, fascinates and amuses but it does not impress, still less does it convince.

The next item on the agenda is still more of an eye-opener. It is the first reading of a bill regarding the military uniform.

Here again an embittered Social Democrat leads the fight. Here is a pacifist at heart, or by profession, probably really neither. But his ostensibly unexceptionable pacifism expends itself in overt and covert attacks upon the army. To watch

the military members of the Government in attendance endure those attacks in silent, agonised despair is to realise something like the patience of Job. Before the war, a lieutenant and ten men would have made short work of such provocative busybodies. And now senior generals of very high rank have to listen to them in solemn silence. Without taking sides in these domestic squabbles you cannot help saying to these high officers: "*Tu l'as voulu, Georges Dandin, tu l'as voulu!*"

In the speeches that follow denunciation and reproach alternate. It is not easy to distinguish between truth and special pleading.

Says one:

"One hundred fatherlandless devils in the Ruhr have accomplished more for Germany than all you babblers and idlers!"

And again:

"So-and-so has had courage enough to accept full responsibility for the murder of officers. He should be given credit...."

And then:

"Murder is murder. Why do you view with so much abhorrence one murder more than another?"

To the offer:

"I will explain the principles of murder," comes the reply:

"To hell with your principles!"
and the rebuke:

"I see in the smile of Mr. So-and-so a sign of utter depravity!"

While all these sparks of indignation have been shooting up from the tribune, a miserable, anæmic-

looking individual on 1½ legs leaning heavily against a desk in the middle of a radial gangway looks round, grins and delivers himself of a guffaw of incredulity.

This is enough to work up the orator and his party to a frenzy of annoyance. "He laughs!" exclaims one of them, and abuse upon abuse is heaped on his devoted head. There is real courage in facing a hostile crowd on 1½ legs only, when one cannot run away, and the hilarious pale-faced one shows it.

The bewildered president addresses another incoherent appeal for moderation. He has not the toc-toc-toc or the ting-ling-ling of the French President, wherewith to drown disorder in such emergencies, but the sight of his massive form going up and down is more effective as a sedative.

Nowhere else in the world could a mere guffaw prove a red rag to the bull, which is Democracy in power in Germany to-day.

Why is democracy so irritable? you ask, for a democracy which is intolerant and impatient is worse than no democracy. The reason is that German democracy is not in power really. It has got the name, the shadow of power, but the hard reins of power are held by other hands. It has the shadow, the illusion; another, the substance and reality.

Democracy in Germany is something transitional. It is too weak and unsteady to consolidate its position. It foresees a day, when it may have to make room for monarchy or communism. Extreme Right and Extreme Left are both on the alert, if not openly and actually on the war-path.

Both are exhibiting a clear tendency to encroach on and penetrate into the central *bloc* which holds together the prescriptive preserves of liberalism and democracy. Time alone will decide which is to get in there first.

Such are the considerations which must pass through the head of every genuine German democrat when he puts on his thinking-cap. But the Reichstag is certainly not the right place for using that adventitious aid to reflection. Here he must act, and strike, and strike hard while the iron is hot. This psychological dilemma may somewhat explain the fiery heat of denunciation, and impatience with criticism, and intolerance of rival parties, which a German democrat rightly or wrongly exhibits in the Reichstag to-day.

But in his calmer moments he is very sentimental and pedantic. He proceeds in his peculiar dry monotone to utter copy-book maxims for the benefit of misguided German officers before him and in the country at large.

He says that it is more honourable to be a servant of the people than a servant of the Kaiser. You wonder why this reference to a person who has no official existence or recognition in modern Germany. Evidently, the Kaiser may go, but the spirit of Kaiserism remains.

He further says that a population does not exist for the sake of the authorities, but the authorities do exist for the sake of the population. This is addressed to the Junkers who manned the German Civil Service before the war. Evidently, Junkers may go, but the spirit of Junkerism remains.

He also says: "I am not an enemy of the soldier, but of the system." Has, then, the war been fought and lost in vain?

He is willing to fraternise with the soldier. The Reichswehr soldier is his *Bundesgenoss*, his pal, and that certainly is a feeling of brotherly love for the military, which the pre-war democrat never entertained.

But what about the monarchist soldier? He is a relic of the Great War. For him, apparently, there is no place in the democrat's big heart. He is downright hostile, if no worse, to that ill-equipped, debile species which failed to survive the great struggle for existence decided in 1918.

"It is extraordinary," he says, "that the Republic should esteem the old imperial uniform so highly. Nowhere except in Germany would such a topsy-turveydom be possible."

And now comes the supreme fling: If these officers still cherish the old monarchist uniforms, why did they not fight for them in 1918? However, he presents that sour alternative to the serious consideration of monarchically-minded, irresponsible young officers and passes on to sing the praises of the New Republic.

He is proud to be a German, proud to be a German Republican, proud of a Germany which remained healthy enough to rise to sublime heights through Republicanism.

This sturdy, hard-headed, horny-handed, Republican or Democrat is not tilting at windmills or fighting shadows of his own imagination, or exhibiting a needlessly bellicose spirit for his own pleasure. He knows, he feels that a deep way

down the heart of half Republican Germany there is a soft corner for the Kaiser and King. He sees that Young Germany, despite the tribulations of the War, which robbed it of nurture, and softened its bones, and stunted its physique, and imprinted on the visage of youth the pallor of age, still cherishes an ideal, the ideal of a definite return to pre-War Germany. He dimly realises that despite the pyrotechnics of communism and lip-loyalty to the Republic, the old unmistakable *kerngesund* Germany is still struggling towards anti-republican ideals.

In his grave concern more than in anything else we must read the illusions that beset and obsess Republican Germany under the incubus of monarchism. The reason is clear. The Germans have known better and worthier days under the old régime. The utmost that the new régime has accomplished is something altogether negative. More prosperity than what there was in the past it does not promise. In fact, to many a grumbler, it does not promise any prosperity at all. Rings of steel, to be manipulated by enemies or rivals or even neutrals under the mandate of a nebulous league of other nations, offer no clear guarantee for a definite future. The 14 points failed her once before in 1918, so Germany feels. They may fail her again to-day. She may be right or she may be wrong, but it is enough to say that that feeling exists. What marvel then that like Cinderella after the ball, working harder than any drudge and for lower wage, Germany should feel her soul go out in longing towards all that made her blest in the glorious, but not irrevocable; past.

CHAPTER V.

In Italy:

1. *"The Grandeur that was Rome!"* 2. *The Tiber and the Ganges, or a lesson for the Tiber.* 3. *Montecitorio, between a drinkshop and a pawnhouse.* 4. *Lazzaroni.* 5. *Gyrating corridors.* 6. *The perfect parliament-house within.* 7. *The friendly arena, a neutral zone.* 8. *The anxious deputy: Bravi at his heels!* 9. *Omniscient Press has no information!* 10. *Further proof of guilt. Tanglefoot justice.* 11. *The lesson of the past. Julius Cæsar.* 12. *A Bundle of Twigs.* 13. *1920 and 1925.* 14. *The Dux.* 15. *Fascists and Demoliberals.* 16. *"Legalised Fascist Illegalism."* 17. *The Logic of Force.* 18. *The Fascist Creed: A Fascist State.* 19. *Lenin and Mussolini: Crossed Hammer and Sickle and Bundle of Twigs.* 20. *Comparison and contrast.* 21. *Democracy on the wheel.*

The "grandeur that was Rome" must have felt rather cramped and uncomfortable in having to distribute itself unequally over seven unequal hill-tops. The influx and growth of population has has so surcharged the strictly limited room at its disposal for expansion that Rome wears an eternal look of overfulness, not to say congestion, like life itself. And Father Tiber, to whom the Romans rightly pray, for despite its placid flow it has treacherous whirls and shallows, makes up in meanderings what it lacks in width, poise and amplitude. If it had been more mystic and spacious and straight, the grandeur of Rome would have extended itself along its two banks, instead of forsaking them for the nearby hill-tops, as it eventually did. How far the course and quality

of civilisation would have been altered, had the Tiber been another Ganges, will remain a speculation of perennial interest. Suffice it here to observe that barring the Palace of Justice, a construction of no hoary date, and a round castle, meant to intimidate and not enchant, no third building rises into blue heaven from the soft appealing meanders of the Tiber. Really, the Tiber has done Rome less than justice. How far the Tiber has contributed to Rome's greatness is not apparent at first glimpse or last. To the right, St. Peter's and the Vatican have given it the widest possible berth. And to the left, all public places have concentrated themselves on the seven hills and left the stream severely alone. Decidedly Rome does not seem proud of the Tiber.

Among the public buildings which are fugitives to hill-tops must be classed the Italian Chamber of Deputies or *Camera dei Deputati*, on Montecitorio. One views it with a feeling of disappointment tinged with a slight acid disrespect.

In spite of segregating sanitary lanes it appears sandwiched in between a drinkshop and a pawnhouse, pettiness to right and pettiness to left. It boasts of no foreground or approach worth the name, while whatever there is of frontage or facade is sure to be overlooked because it cannot be rightly seen. The Palace of Westminster overlooks the cool lapping of water along a river-front unrivalled in the world. *Palais Bourbon* in Paris mirrors itself in graceful dignity in the broad-bosomed Seine. The Reichstag-House in Berlin rises amid the sylvan graces of a people's pleasure garden, the avenue and symbols of Victory spread

out at its feet. But this precious pile which houses the *Camera dei Deputati* strikes you as a sordid outcrop among the *lazzaroni* which seem to drag it down rather than themselves be uplifted by it. Is this Rome indeed, you may ask with Shakespeare, and room enough for only.....*Lazzaroni*? The determined, hardworking North Italian, relic of Alaric, exclaims: "South of Rome is Africa!" There is some truth in the sting. It is the *lazzaroni* spirit which undermined Rome's greatness in her palmy days, the same lethargic spirit which revels in *dolce far niente*, takes its siesta, and confronts you with a spectacle of cheap, leisured ease which is African....

But you have no right to be harsh. It is impossible to provide a suitable, artificial approach to a building on a hill-top or high ground, to which also cluster, like grapes to vine, petty houses and all adjuncts which go to form the habitat of the poor. However, the impossible has been once, and only once, achieved in the old papal summer residence on the Quirinal hill, called the Quirinale, now the Royal Palace in Rome, which has a terraced *piazza* in front and a glorious garden capping and overhanging the escarpment behind. The Palace of the Deputies has neither. Let us walk right up the narrow steps.

You feel lost in the corridors which run round and round and up and down. The stairways themselves are corridors which continue the gyratory feeling. You are oppressed, and not impressed.

But the corridors are only lines of communication, and not waiting-halls. These open into the corridors as you proceed and comprise waiting-

rooms, cabinets, *buffets*, committee-rooms for the several parties, the Government, the deputies, their families, the press and the visiting public. There are several floors of such rooms and cabinets grouped round the annular corridors. It is doubtful if any other parliament-house offers as many facilities from the purely utilitarian point of view.

The parliament-hall itself is a most business-like proposition. It is arranged as an amphitheatre, with circular rows of seats and radial gangways showing up the complexion and composition and allocation of the parties to perfection, without emphasising any invidious distinction between front-benchers and back-benchers. But most wonderful and impressive of all is the central arena or free space between the president's and orator's tribunes and the front rows of the semi-circularly arranged benches. This free space with comfortable *fauteuils* or even a table which can be brought in or out at will, intervenes between a deputy's seat and his tribune; it mutely appeals to sweet reasonableness; it must surely inspire the most intransigent with a mollifying spirit of compromise and give-and-take. Its very spaciousness is a standing call for moderation. Fancy cannot picture all the conceivable philippics which aborted and were lost to history, while the impassioned orator lingered over the central free-space. It is a sort of no man's land, a common ground, standing on which you cannot but re-survey your own problems or grievances through the neutral tints of the Chamber's and country's best interests.

Maximum utility is the key-note of all the arrangements here. For instance, the tiers of

seats do not rise abruptly into mid-heaven, one on top of or overlapping the other as in the English chamber, nor do they fall flat as in the German or French ones. Acoustics and lighting are as near practical perfection as possible. The new chamber which is replacing the effete old construction bit by bit, is a masterpiece from the utilitarian point of view. This is the only one that counts in the long run.

Contrasts are inevitable. Here a hardworked deputy does not need to sit and shuffle in a hard seat and stiff posture, as in the English house. Nor need he gesticulate or exchange blows with a dear colleague, ominously, temptingly within reach close by, as in the French chamber. Still less need he breathe fire and denunciation into the unwilling ears of the whole house crowding round him as in the German Reichstag. Easy indeed must be parliamentary life to the Italian deputy.

But actually the *onorevole* deputy's life should be anything but a happy one. Manzoni in his masterpiece "*I Promessi Sposi*" shows how the *bravi* or desperadoes step in ruthlessly between the betrothed ones and their marriage. Some sort of political *bravi* must be also at work in the precincts of Montecitorio, violently intervening between a deputy's person and his sense of duty.

Of course you do not know. You cannot know. You cannot even presume to know. Your Italian paper, which can instruct you to a nicety on all the queer happenings in Tiziouzou or Timbuctoo, maintains a perfectly judicial reserve on that point. We do not know or do not care to know, is what it virtually exclaims between the

lines. But at times it does let itself go. And then it serves you up a lengthy lucubration, which seems a chapter torn out of a text-book of Moral Philosophy.

Often the bald facts, without comments or hints, reach your ears like echoes from nowhere in a sea-shell. Even your curiosity has no chance of being decently roused. One *Onorevole* disappears without leaving a trace. Another is badly beaten. A third is waylaid and just escapes with his life. How many others incur similar risks for their political views or speeches, they alone or their insurance companies may be able to say. You cannot guess. And tangle-foot enquiry is everytime slow and probably off the track. The supreme judges await "further proof of guilt", whatever that weighty legal phrase may imply. Some fool makes a confession to a knave, and fool and knave are both declared untraceable. The confession has no judicial significance; in judicial language it does not exist. The tangle is more mysterious than ever, but when you take no notice of it, there is no tangle at all. So all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

Some gigantic panels in the Senate-house not far away, which depict stirring scenes in the history of Rome's liberties, bear the superscription: "Study the Past if you would understand the Future!" You wonder what precise stage or period of Rome's past you are to study to be able to understand this uncertain and agitated present.

Julius Cæsar describes in his inimitable Third Person Singular his landing procession at Alexandria, when the might of Rome preceded the actual

processionists in the shape of *fascies* borne by the lictors. The effect of those symbols of Rome's majesty on the foreign Alexandrians and the run-aways from Rome, sheltering in Alexandria, was anything but fortunate. Little did they care for the absurd bundles of twigs and they showed it in word and deed. It needed all Julius Cæsar's military prowess and statesmanship and administrative skill to re-enforce respect for the bundles of twigs and to restore them their old triumph.

Between 1920 and 1925, the bundles of twigs have triumphed again. Never was Italy's star so low as in 1920. Her fortunes were at a nadir, the emblems of her old-world greatness had been very long forgotten, the twigs or *fascies* conveyed no meaning to an Italian, literally or figuratively. The country was steadily going Bolshevik; the Red Flag was flying over factory and workshops, even municipal building and public office. The government of the day, or of the hour, was just functioning from hour to hour in terror and on sufferance.

None but a dictator could re-organise, re-solidarise, re-discipline the nation. At a time when all the parties were weakly clamouring for their rights, a tyrant was wanted in order to drill into their jaded minds the iron sense of duty and responsibility. At the psychological moment, out of the very ranks of the wreckers there appeared such a dictator or leader or Dux, like a *deus ex machina*, on the scene. In an easy march on Rome he recorded a lightning, spectacular triumph, and the powers of darkness fled before him. Drawing inspiration from Rome's mighty past, he restored

the twigs or *fascēs* to their pristine glory as emblems of his nation's greatness.

The party of the *fascēs* carried all before them. It had all the brute strength, the unchecked passion, the intransigence, the fanaticism of a political faction of the olden days. Milk-and-water liberalism, misdirected communism, lost ground before it. It re-drilled and re-disciplined the nation. Crimes and misdeeds and blunders were committed by the more undisciplined among it, but it pursued its course from triumph to triumph, assimilating each friendly faction, exterminating opposition. As the biggest, the only vertebrate and self-conscious party in the land, it dominated the chambers, the political platforms, the press. It set before itself the ideal: Identify the State with Fascism, and Fascism with the State!

What is its position to-day? Where the democrats and the liberals, contemptuously hyphenated by the Fascist press into "Demo-liberals" would have recoiled in horror, the Fascists have not hesitated to adopt terroristic and 'un-twentieth century methods in order to consolidate their position.

The right-hand man of their leader or Duce claims at the present day to have "legalised Fascist Illegalism", whatever that ominous phrase may fully imply. He exults that his party has not hesitated to curtail the freedom of the press, to suppress its license, to end its impunity. He exults that Fascism has found it necessary to strike at the "dark forces" in the honest belief that Fascism shall not tolerate the existence of secret societies, while Fascism itself does not encourage

or even permit secrecy in its own deliberations. He exults that Fascism is stamping out infidelity from the public services. The Chamber has passed a law, making it impossible for the servants or dependents of the State to be anything but Fascists, as experience shows that those who call themselves un-political, without or above party politics, have more than once sabotaged the Fascist Revolution.

Continuing the logic of force, it is impossible to tolerate anti-Fascist elements in the communal administration, exactly as such elements could not be allowed in other spheres. A project of law, in the shape of a harmless necessary bill, has been prepared which will make the administration Fascist outright. Unless a Fascist, no one can pretend to be a good Italian.

This zealot will not stop there. Fascism must be a religion and all Fascists should be priests of that faith. Steady pressure will be maintained on the government in order to compel it to legalise, adopt and activate the whole Fascist programme. Furthermore, those renegades who traduce and damage the country from the relative security of a foreign shore, will be chastised as traitors. Let not oppositionist deputies or senators rely on those birds of ill-omen. And let those foreign nations who employ such traitors also beware lest they be also betrayed. Above all, let Fascists be true to their one principle of absolute intransigence.

He concludes with the plea that Fascism is not against the workman or the villager. In its very origin and mainspring, Fascism is proletarian and agrarian. Fascism was born of the people; amid

the travail of the people it has lived ; it has grown in the suffering of a people ; it has worked for the welfare of the people. Let not the proletarian or agrarian child of the people consider Fascism its enemy.

This protagonist of Fascism has spoken with all the fervour of a neophyte. Fascism, he asserts, is not a doctrine or pragmatism, but an elementary historico-dynamic force, which in martyrdom and self-sacrifice has faced and conquered the growing despotism of the Reds. Fascism has identified itself with the State and given a new basis to the State and a new meaning to citizenship. Too long has that sorry little farce or carnival of demo-liberalism gone on, which allowed every renegade or charlatan to escape to a friendly, foreign country, and from the relative safety of its shores to continue a campaign of vilification and abuse and financial strangulation of the mother-land. Too long have the demo-liberals flirted with nebulous rights of democracy and liberty, while they have easily forgotten the iron duties which those very rights impose. It is ludicrous to imagine that a person should be allowed all the rights of Italian citizenship, the right to live in peace, the right to be defended by Italy's laws at home, by her arms abroad, through the mere fact of the entry of his name in the birth-register. It is more than ludicrous, it is criminal, to allow such a person to work against his country's best interests from the safe refuge of a foreign shore. Unless he is a Fascist, he is no Italian, and being no Italian he must forfeit all his rights at home and abroad.

Such is the position at the present day. From

the intransigence of Fascism in Italy to the intransigence of Communism in Russia there is but one easy step, although the two are poles asunder. Two ideals rule the world of politics, two symbols strive for mastery: The ideal of Lenin, having for symbol, crossed hammer and sickle, and the ideal of Mussolini having for symbol a few twigs of antiquity.

The few twigs are at one pole; the crossed hammer, and sickle, at the other. Between these two poles or extremes, all the patch-work parties and motley governments of modern Europe live, move and have their being. Between them every *bloc*, governmental or anti-governmental, may be easily ranged and co-ordinated. Parliamentary institutions have lost their supremacy, their individuality, their very basis. They are amorphous, decadent, servile bodies, hopelessly at the mercy of the powers of the day,—to be petted and pampered if they carry out their master's commands, or to be ignored or re-fashioned if they do not. Italian parliaments, as is boastfully claimed, register and legalise Fascist decrees. The Russian bodies are equally manacled. Parliaments are so constituted that they have to obey higher orders, whether they emanate from a Grand Council of Fascists, or a Secret Council of Commissars.

There are obvious points of contact between the extreme types of autocratic or dictatorial states. Each claims to have saved the country, the one from aggressive foreign states, the other from internecine civil war. Each has drilled and disciplined the individual, curtailed his rights, added to his responsibilities. No Italian is an Italian,

unless he is a Fascist, no Russian is a Russian to a Russian, unless he is a Communist. The granite basis of Italy is agriculture; that of Russia is likewise agriculture. And here the comparison ends.

While both countries have sacrificed parliamentary institutions, Italy has achieved, under Fascism, as its dearest enemies must concede, an industrial expansion which is a miracle to those who knew her five years ago. But Communist Russia is as far backward as ever. Fascism has restored Italy's prestige in the markets, the *cafés*, the chancelleries of Europe and the world. Russia's credit was never so low, as at the present day. And yet despite such feverish activity, the Italian *Lira* is as low as ever. Now, we ask, what use is industrial expansion when its main index in the counting-houses of the world, the watered *lira*, is no better than the Russian *Chervonetz*? That is a cry of despair.

It leads to others: What use is the sacrifice of the individual to the state be that state industrialised or mercantile or militarist or communist, or fascist? And going down to bed-rock, does the state exist for the citizen, or the citizen for the state?

These are problems awaiting solution not to-day, but for all time. But what is to happen to parliamentary institutions and their fine spirit of democracy while the clash of world-forces is evolving a solution of those problems?

Time alone can, and will, answer. Meanwhile the conclusion must be drawn that in Communist Russia democracy is a spectre. In Fascist Italy, democracy is on the wheel.

CHAPTER VI.

In Geneva:

1. *Alps, Island, Lake, Swans, Yourself.* 2. *Geneva's Internationals—Fugitives from gods and governments.* 3. *Voltaire, the First International.* 4. *Rousseau, the Second International.* 5. *Rousseau's Isle, Geneva's heart and soul.* 6. *The Palace of Internationalism, league against league.* 7. *Genesis of the League of Nations: an afterthought.* 8. *The damned on earth and the great un-damned.* 9. *An International Conference.* 10. *Group meetings.* 11. *Unpolitical fêtes.* 12. *Boredom and its two causes.* 13. *Terrible Interpreters.* 14. *All begins and ends in smoke!* 15. *The Fricassé of speeches.* 16. *The High Contending Parties.* 17. *Breezes and Scenes: A backward country. An advanced country. A recalcitrant country. Two neighbouring countries. A distressful country.* 18. *The Jolly Beggars' Opera.* 19. *Bakers and babies.* 20. *Hardworked delegates.* 21. *The Mecca of the Mighty and the Babel of Babblers.*

'The canopy of snow-capped Alps, pleasantly near enough on clear days, but invisible in the dust or haze; the silver-gray carpet of a lake big enough to be a sea; a little oval island bearing tall trees and a squat statue set like emerald in an arm of the sea-like lake; palatial but uninspired box-like houses which dominate the water-front; and fussy swans floating double, swan and shadow, across the still image of the belt of houses mirrored in the water; and yourself, indeed most of all yourself, beak-nosed foreigner in quest of adventure—these are the essential marks, if not the main ingredients, of modern international Geneva.

Geneva has always aspired to be international; or if not, the freaks of fortune have thrust

internationalness upon it. And, anyhow, it has the repute of offering asylum to all who are fugitives from gods and governments alike. Such asylum may not always be offered, but it is always consistently taken and enjoyed. A cure in Geneva is as inspiring to the political outcaste, as a sojourn in Rome is to the passionate pilgrim. The white-topped Alps protect and re-assure; the melting lake makes a welcoming gesture. The City Fathers have wrung their liberties from pontiffs, kings and tyrants, and prizes dearly bought are always amply enjoyed. No wonder that the hopeless, lost or losing causes of the earth have made Geneva their second home.

A little French lawyer's son was exiled from his native land; befriended, and then banished by a royal patron in Berlin; helped and then forgotten by a publisher in Holland; arrested and tortured by the police for the alleged theft of a king's poems. He drifted homeless across half Europe, he—the acknowledged champion of the wronged of all lands. Geneva offered him a home. The Free City of Geneva feared not princes, prelates or kings. That was Geneva's First International. Geneva made Voltaire, and Voltaire made the French Revolution.

Another one of the world's Vast Disinherited, Rousseau, found a home and refuge in Geneva. Gazing at the statue of that squat, expressionless individual in the heart of the islet bearing his name, you wonder to yourself and ask:

Was this the man that overturned false idols, and set up new ideals in education, statecraft, philosophy?

Was this the face which frowned on the follies of society, till it shamed them out of existence?

Was his the voice which counselled and preached "Return to Nature!" to a misunderstanding people, who answered with ridicule and taking him too literally affected to go on all fours with an unwashed carrot in their mouth?

He looks all so inconsequential and incongruous and absurd. So puny! Yet that one over yonder, overlooking a herbaceous border and surveying just as puny cygnets drawing streaks across the clear water, that is Rousseau, the father of Lassales and Marxes and Lenins, the Second International. View him well, "*Ce sublime corrupteur!*" whom even to-day gawky little demagogues at the far end of the globe misread and misquote to each other's obvious confusion.

Rousseau has made no paltry dime-in-the-slot revolution; no sudden change in pomps and shows and circumstance; no tinkering with forms or phases or fashions. He worked deep, and still works deeper in. He is the ferment which is acting, and will continue acting on the worlds of thought and feeling, of politics, sociology and culture. For Rousseau, in the words of a heroic poet,

"Ira fertiliser, de ses restes immondes,

"Les sillons de l'espace où fermentent les mondes!"

Rousseau's Isle is the heart and soul of Geneva. Out of sight of Rousseau stands the Palace of Internationalism. It is a thing of recent growth, almost an excrescence, largely an after-thought. Why an after-thought, you ask? If the damned on earth, the scarecrows of hunger, the disinherited of their nations, the landless of all lands, can combine and group themselves into international brotherhoods and parade with cross

and banner, why not also the bourgeois and the bureaucrat, the inarticulate middle class and the tongue-tied civil servant, the businessman and the property-holder as well? Why not all the classes and all the nations of the world? Why not should the whole world band itself into an organisation for the defence of its rights and the redress of its wrongs?

The ideal of a fraternal league of nations has broken many hearts, not the least that of the kindly, unworldly teacher from the West, who collapsed under its spell.

But let us return to the reality: An International Conference is billed for session in Geneva. The local hostelrys, some of which even promise private baths and running water, are agog with expectation. Strange-looking frisures, tonsures, complexions, strike the eye. How these exotic individuals, monocled or be-spectacled or neither, but all equally puffed and pompous, bear themselves nobly as they glide along the asphalt! How they brush past the unhygienic Genevans, who with dropped jaws and white-upturned eyes stand indifferently to attention, and then follow them with looks which are probably more eloquent and certainly more safe than words!

Are not these birds of passage worthy of their gorgeous plumage? Are they not the pick of their lands? Do they not represent their magistrates, their soldiers, their judges, their police and of course their peoples also? They are Excellencies, "*Their Excellencies*" all, and rightly called so.....by right, or courtesy or fashion, we will not pause to enquire.

Such newborn "Excellencies" are the models of propriety and self-consciousness. But for a robust physique and well-arched spine, they would bend double

under the weight of their mandates, those imponderable burdens which they are to carry night and day, waking or sleeping, walking or talking. This is no matter for mirth, but for serious sympathy. Journalists are enterprising even in Europe. Curiosity-seekers, whether they take the form of gouty old men taking a hopeless cure in the same hotel or whether they assume the flimsy, exiguous raiment of a huntress of fortune, are so impetuous, so obtrusive, so dull-witted and thick-skinned. They just will not be denied. There should be no cause for surprise if even the stone-walls of snobbishness fail to prove impregnable to assaults from such hardened climbers. And snobbishness? There is much virtue in snobbishness. But for it all barriers of society, of vanity, of wealth, would collapse and crumble to pieces. The barriers of caste, in comparison, are mere walls of a child's castle in the sand. . . .

The Grand International Conference is at last in session. You are perched in a salient seat in a corner of the very spacious, wide, empty gallery. An empty gallery! It only proves what an unimaginative, backward race the Genevans must be. Some people do not realise their own blessings until they lose them. If it were proposed to transfer an international conference to Capri or Corfu or Crete, not to mention hospitable Hibernia, every Genevan would hold up five-fingered hands in horror! Why should Geneva have the pick of the world's intellect and the world's wealth, say the envious of other likely places. Geographically, Ireland would be a centre of gravity, to which delegates from East and West and North and South should gravitate with a minimum of discomfort and displacement. But for the moment the

thoughtless Genevan does not bother himself about filling an inviting, empty seat with his capacious person.

But watch the floor below: Excellencies with their assistants and advisors and secretaries and staffs have spread themselves out in their *fauteuils*, each behind his appropriate desk. These desks are arranged in spacious semi-circles off the base-line which bears the presidential tribune in the centre and minor officials' bureaux to either side.

There is a buzz of dignified whisper, without any vulgar sign of undue animation.

The President, what a venerable kindly looking gentleman! Fit father of such a brilliant assemblage of the spirits of the age, he commands universal respect and obedience. He emerges from the forest of papers lying in idle sheaves around him; picks one out after mature consideration; stands up; gives a preliminary rap to the table to disengage general attention from the little pools and eddies of idle chatter; addresses himself to read from the paper he holds so lovingly in his hand; and...he sits down again! He has picked up the wrong paper.

Ten fingers rummage through the papers of all sizes littered on the desk before him. Helpful attendants from the adjacent benches join in the active search or follow it with anxious eyes. The president at last discovers his copy of the agenda, stands up again, and in the language of his own choosing reads out the first item.

The business of the house proceeds at a brisk pace. Two-thirds of the house does not understand the language used in the proceedings; the

remaining one-third is rather tired of the imaginative interpreter who interprets with all the license denied to a poet, and at times improves the hesitative attributes of the original in the process. All are anxious to get through the proceedings, which are formal to a degree. Speaking and voting by show of hands alternate as if worked by clock-work. Broad, colourless, innocuous points of principle, mistermned, declarations are taken up, appraised, thrown open for general discussion, exposed to any possible opposition (of course, not!) accepted by show of hands in detail, ratified by show of hands in the lump, and the Chamber dissolves itself like *fondant* in an eager child's fingers into the various little groups of likely persons, possessing competence for working out the practical details that are necessary. As the number of likely persons is limited, the rest of the house has no choice but to adjourn to a long enough date, till the competent group should put up the cut and dry proposals for ratification. Here we take leave of the plenary sessionists and follow the group in its activities.

Excellencies and all disperse in the words of the *chansonnier*:

*"Et la séance fut levée,
Et ces messieurs
Et ces mesieurs
S'en sont allés
Bras dessous, bras dessus,
Au déjeuner!"*

They are gone, but they have left behind, like footprints in the sands of time, groups or commissions or committees. These are minor bodies who have to

continue the real business. What they deliberate and decide and finally propose in silence and tears—for they work in camera, without gallery or pressmen, and their multi-lingual wrangles must be bringing them to the verge of tears—the conference in plenary sitting will accept and ratify.

Such a group is dominated or fathered by a few outstanding figures who turn up year after year like hardy annuals, and find in Geneva a home from home. They may or may not be experts but they are wonderful knights of the table. The first requisite in diplomatic service, and still more in its adoptive sister international service, is not a good tongue, but a good appetite. A dyspeptic diplomat toying with *zwieback* at the festive spread of a banquet table will not carry the same conviction as the florid one, who gives full play to his knife and fork. Hence a group commissioner will collect at his own festive board such others whose opinions require moulding or correction or direction, and between two courses many an intricate problem may find an easy solution. Unpolitical dinners at which no speeches are made end as the most political dinners possible. Instead of waste of good warm words on a crowd in collective speaking, there is that individual appeal or coaching or canvas, which no obduracy can long survive.

When these carefully planned and rehearsed *impromptu* feasts prepare a genial atmosphere, and postprandial *causeries* prepare congenial opinions, the course of the group meeting the following morning becomes plain, plain to the point of boredom.

This boredom may arise from two causes: When the drama has been carefully rehearsed, the actual performance is lacking in surprises. There is nothing

so boring as letting or watching the obvious take its course.

But the second cause has got to be seen in operation to be fully appreciated. Imagine a group of 30 members whose mother-tongues are English, French, German, Italian, Spanish. To be fully representative such a group should also comprise members speaking Russian, Chinese, Japanese, etc. If these members come from the higher-educated-classes of their countries, English, French, German would be intelligible to all. But if their respective proletariats are also going to be included in the representative group, then there will be much confusion of speech. For a worker from South America will insist on speaking and hearing Spanish, a worker from Russia, Russian. More interpreters will then be pressed into service. And any interpreter who so steps in forms a barrier between question and answer, speech and speech, interjection and reply, point of order and explanation, and so on *ad infinitum*.

Now interpreters have thankless jobs to do and they do them badly. If scrupulously correct and faithful, their rendering is slow, heavy, pedantic, almost nonsensical. If they render liberally and give their fancy the reins, or in the brief time at their disposal boil down the original to its main points, they introduce an element of uncertainty and liveliness into the proceedings which does not quite make for co-operation. In either case they try tempers, waste time, fetter the free course of deliberation. "*Traduttore è traditore*," says the Italian, and what is true of the painstaking translator in his study is still more true of the slipshod interpreter in a hurry. And then the long waits between speech and speech, or question and

reply, or proposal and acceptance, are a weariness of the flesh. Patient suffering members do not express it in words, they express it in smoke. *The committee room is plastered with layer on layer of tobacco smoke in which the nobler blends are obliterated by the baser. Blue smoke, gray smoke, any smoke will do. Watch it drifting in curious, languorous coils and curls through the thick, heavy, dope-bound air of the room. It is easily possible that members sitting far apart may fail to see or recognise each other should either or both be wearing glasses. Heaven help the non-smoker in such gloom !

Half the period of its session, such a group meeting is a slow-smoking competition. The remaining half is an example how the same platitude may be clothed in different languages without gaining freshness.

Either performance ends in boredom. But boredom is better than murder. For if any enthusiastic speaker, whom you now see mentally resting on his oars after having gracefully steered himself through polished periods and topical allusions and trenchant paradoxes and suave sentimentalism, were to follow his wayward self-willed interpreter through his *revised version* in which all the dainty or effective or arresting trappings of speech are flung aside like rubbish, delicate points slurred over or blunted or misplaced, and the general sense reproduced in the minimum of words chosen in a hurry,—why, then, the author of the original speech would just murder the fellow who is mangling it. But he does not know it, and there is peace. How quiet is Geneva despite such open incitements to breaches of the peace !

As to the original speeches themselves, a polyglot person would compare them to a jig-saw puzzle, in

which none of the original pieces can be made to fit in at any point. Between speech and speech there is no logical sequence, no organic growth, no inter-connection. Carefully doctored, and abbreviated, and edited for the press, they *subsequently* read like jewels of logic and lucidity. But as they fall from the speakers' lips and are picked up by willing ears, they fail to convince.

Conflicts of opinion would arise more frequently and acutely but for the long lapses of time, and the interpreters' interludes, and the thick pall of smoke, which screens the High Contending Parties.

Despite adventitious aids to peace, breezes and scenes are at times inevitable.

A *backward* country is for laying down a principle; an *advanced* country is for rushing into realities and details.

A *recalcitrant* country is accepting a principle for others, with reservations for itself.

Two *neighbouring* countries, full of neighbourly hate, are attitudinising over a minor point of detail, having obviously in view the ulterior object of paying off old scores.

A *distressful* country will strike a novel chord in the chorus by asking for relief, and thereby threaten to turn a solemn international meeting into a Jolly Beggars' Opera!

But the solemn sobriety of the proceedings will be stultified in another form. The comic will break through when least expected or wanted. Imagine half a hundred delegates who have come from all quarters of the globe gravely deliberating whether bakers shall bake bread in night hours,—a question of no conceivable interest whatever to the major portion of the

world's population. "What is the fruit of your labours on my behalf?" asks rice-eating Japan of its delegate who has spent half a fortune in putting half a girdle round the world, in order to go and sit and deliberate in Geneva: "Shall there be night labour in bakeries?" And the delegate replies: "We have decided to abolish night labour in bakeries!" But the climax comes in the bakeries themselves, when the bakers decline to be treated like babies and put to bed at sunset!

Waste of energy; waste of money; waste of opportunity.

Geneva has two rôles. It is the Mecca of the Mighty. A few strong men come to Geneva year after year like hardy annuals and shape the course of opinion, of debate, of consultative legislation. These are the mighty, who pull the strings.

Geneva is also a Babel for babblers. A polyglot crowd of sightseers comes from all over the world. They have opportunities of self-education and self-advertisement. They miss neither. Then they talk of principles, ideals, utopias. Such is the Babel of babblers.

When a schemer and a talker are yoked together, the net result of their joint labours will be shuffle, evasion, procrastination, delay. Shall such-and-such ex-enemy member use his native language? The question will go a-begging from committee to committee for reply, and by the time a clear reply is received the necessity therefor shall have totally disappeared. Again, shall so-and-so sit as labour's representative? The question will be referred to one authority, examined by a second, answered by a third, referred to

the country of so-and-so's origin by a fourth, and so on.

More evasion, less delay. For whatever is well done is done quickly enough.

Governments may come and governments may go, but their countries last for ever. So these international excursions to Geneva will never come to a full stop. The mighty shall come to Mecca; the babblers babble on in Babel.

CHAPTER VII.

In Utopia:

1. *Utopia, the land of every man's desire !* 2. *Realism and ideals.* 3. *The five dissipants of parliamentary energy in Europe.* 4. *Utopia for France.* 5. *Utopia for England.* 6. *Utopia for Germany.* 7. *Utopia for Italy.* 8. *Epilogue. Parliaments in chains. A perfectible Parliament.*

Utopia is the land of every man's desire, including the deputy's. A long way down his manifestoes and mandates and addresses, at the very bottom of his expressed and unexpressed ideals in politics you will see the faint lights of Utopia, of the Utopia which he calls and feels his own.

"Here, and nowhere else," exclaims the realist, "is my America !" "Here, and everywhere, is my Utopia !" exclaims the idealist.

The force of idealism in politics cannot be conveyed in words, or figures, or signs. But idealism ruled the world never more strongly than to-day. Reconstructing Europe is not an idle pastime of politicians, but a living reality. And there can be no effective or complete reconstruction of Europe unless and until its parliaments begin to function as independent bodies and realise what they are: keepers of the national conscience, a focus of national activity, a clearing-house of ideas, and moulds for ideals.

Interpellation and interrogation and denunciation and intimidation and evasion, which are the leading clogs on progress in the chambers of France, England,

Germany, Italy and Geneva respectively, must all be recognised as dissipants of collective energy, and kept under proper control.

That is not to say, for instance, that an interpellation is an evil or a nuisance in itself. Often the balance of the political machine, which is the government, cannot be righted except through an interpellation. But the honourable deputies of the French chamber have still to learn and apply two clear principles: (1) It is easier to destroy a *bloc* than to create it. (2) It is better to let the other fellow do your work than do it yourself.

The first principle will be accepted in theory, but how to apply it in practice? *Blocs* are very amorphous, nebulous things. Experience alone will teach you how to rely on them, how to utilise them. And then the experience with each *bloc* has to be learnt afresh, and then totally unlearnt as soon as that *bloc* has collapsed like a soap-bubble. Soap-bubble politics can be easily pursued in the French chamber. It is natural to excitable dilettantes, and youthful iconoclasts, and even wiser men let themselves be unduly swayed by personalities and emotions. How, then, to avoid such superficial soap-bubble politics? The Latin temperament rejoices in shams and scenes and crises, which it accepts in the spirit of a grown-up baby. Infixity of purpose and want of stability and of continuity in one's policy do more harm in the long run than is apparent at first glance to the naked eye. Where else, except in France with her characteristic levity, would it be possible that while the whole country is working at fever-heat its financial strength is being wasted over frivolities and actually undermined by purposeless panderings to political amateurism? It cannot even be

pretended that there are no financial experts in France. That thrifty little nation of thrifty little hard-working, hard-earning, hard-headed *rentiers* and 'petty farmers was, before the war, a model to the whole world of that very financial salubrity, "*assainissement financier*," for which she is now crying as she would for the moon. That was not the work of experts, real or bogus, but the cumulative effect of the hard training each frugal Frenchman had received in the school of everyday life. But to-day the contrast baffles understanding.

If work is at all a blessing in life and a sure stabilising factor in international trade, how is it that the *franc* of hard-worked, in fact over-worked, France is worth less than one-fifth of the shilling of England with its heavy unemployment list? The contrast becomes still more glaring if it is remembered that England has a very heavy outcrop of industrial troubles, while France, on the contrary, employs a vast body of foreign labour drawn from the so-called labour colonies, foreign labourers being actually settled in those colonies on an indenture system with every prospect of providing their adoptive country with a sound and sturdy, hard-working, clear-thinking proletariat. Our wonder and pity at the financial chaos grows deeper as we look round. The once debased German mark can hold its head high, at parity with the proud English shilling. Even the Russian Chervonetz which has still more dubious antecedents than the German mark, is a lusty brute compared with the effete *franc*, which the rival politico-financiers are crushing out of existence. This should not be. France which paid the heavy indemnities to Germany in the 'seventies, and which endured the attritive strain of the World War like no other nation, should be not incapable of the relatively

slight act of self-sacrifice required in rejuvenating the franc. When the *rentier* has swallowed the camel which was the repudiation of her debts by Russia, why should he strain at the gnat, which would be the repudiation of some increasingly worthless paper by his own country? The Chervonetz has a long lease of life because it stands with two feet on the firm soil of core-sound, agrarian Russia, the same old Russia of the bulging corn-bins which floated as in a mirage before the fascinated gaze of even veteran politicians. Russia was the granary of Europe and she can produce enough to re-conquer her economic world-importance. France was the banker of Europe and she can produce enough healthy money through the sweat of her brows, wherewith to finance her old debtors. But that is apparently not to be.

Almost in despair you may turn round and ask: Why does she not burn up all the dirty debased scraps of paper, which pass for currency, and recreate a veritable *franc-or*, redeemable to the last cent in hard, ringing gold, and not hypothecated in a hundred and one risky ways? In a crisis, once, Danton counselled to his compatriots: "*De l'audace, encore de l'audace, toujours de l'audace!*" Is there not one deputy who will give the same advice to the chamber, and show the way by acting upon it himself? No other way can save France from financial ruin, for chaos there is already. There is not a deputy but recognises the imperious needs of the situation, but for obvious reasons all are lacking in courage to meet and face them. They would sooner go on making *blocs* to-day and breaking *blocs* to-morrow, than put their shoulders to the wheel of the coach of state and help it out of the financial morass in which it is engulfed.

This brings us to the second principle: Better let the other fellow do your work than do it yourself. This may savour of indolence but it is the height of policy. Apply it thus:

Let any *bloc*, howsoever constituted, work out a definite financial policy and help it through thick and thin to do so. There can be only one such healthy policy and no second, if we overlook minor differences of detail. Work such a policy assiduously to its end. What does it matter to you whether Duval or Dumont gets the credit? If credit is cheaply earned, you can not begrudge it. But if it is really great, the more will it redound to France's honour and your own.

It may sound incongruous and absurd to call upon one deputy to help another, his enemy, human nature being what we see. But if a radical and a monarchist deputy have stood shoulder to shoulder in a common trench through mud, fire, water, gas and death for four long years, surely they can vote on a common programme for a few days or weeks only. To prepare the way one must separate finance from politics, which is perfectly feasible. If two deputies can sit together round an *apéritif* in the same *café*, for their personal relaxation, they can also sit together for a brief while for the country's benefit on a financial commission. What is wanted is very little: just a lofty moral gesture. Is that asking for too much in the face of a day-to-day triumph of mediocrity?

And **England**—mad old, sad old, bad old England! We still confess like Wordsworth: "With all thy faults, I love thee still!" England, the mistress of half creation, the arbitress of all, and yet a stranger in her own house. England, the land of yellow fog, sour

paradoxes and green experts. England is a Utopia marred in the making.

England's problems defy solution. It is doubtful if they have been fully understood by those best qualified to know. No wonder she is making a wild gesture of despair. See her on your map, how she is kicking Ireland out of her way, shaking the clammy coils of Scotland like a loose turban off her head, and heading for a plunge in the Atlantic.

On the English House of Commons sits a heavy responsibility, if it is to do its duty by the English people. It is to undo the wrong caused by the frenzied industrialisation of the country, and to restore the inner economic balance. It must atone for the evils which have been accumulating for a century, evils which have grown in virulence thanks to its own supineness and lack of vision. There have been sins of omission and commission.

In England, the "Merrie England" of romance and Utopia, while the mercantile state was being moulded, and the country industrialised, a physically strong, spiritually healthy peasantry was heedlessly, needlessly, ceaselessly torn from the soil, dumped into clay-boxes of factories, given soul-killing mechanical operations, and left to grow into automata together with the machines which it helped to keep in perpetual motion.

Goldsmith was a true prophet when he said:

*"Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates and men decay."*

In the mechanistic order of things which ruled in England for a century and is still going strong, trade has accumulated out of all proportion, but the decay in men has been nonetheless acute and certain. The

stop-gap remedies or palliatives that have been proposed from time to time under the euphemism of benefits for workers will expose that decay convincingly. General relief, insurance, garden colonies, sanatoria, homes, etc., etc., are all halting remedial schemes which are devised to stop the rot and decay in men; attractive projects for co-partnership, big bonuses, short hours are meant to save their flagging spirits from the daily grind; but the evil has a deeper seat or focus, and has not even been fully recognised, let alone countered with success.

While the old rustic lived on the land, with the land, for the land, his industrialised descendant is living on sticky margarine, watered beer and doctored air, with all the tools of his complete enslavement as a machine among machines, for percentages, dividends and balance-sheets.

For the old healthy revelry and horseplay of a fair in Bideford or Donnybrook, the industrialist state has substituted strikes and lockouts, cuts in wages, short hours, visible or invisible blackleg labour, and the general killing uncertainty of everyday life. It is an arguable point whether the Lyddite machine-wreckers' failure was not a setback to civilization in the long run and widest sense of the term.

Agriculture, too, has not prospered due to the withering influence of industry. That agriculture can be a profitable and elevating industry even in this twentieth century, let the sturdy little French farmer testify. In independence and spiritual strength, the agriculturist, however neglected and decried, is still an easy first. The Russian Bolshevist has not broken his spirit; the French Government is afraid of him; the German Reich owes him its financial salvation.

Here in England agriculture is not a blessing, but a problem. England is fast becoming a land of problems. And one more or less does not seem to weigh upon the national conscience or its 600 keepers who sit on their hard seats in the House of Commons. Their problems, like the poor, are always with them. They think in decimals and percentages, ponder over palliatives and sedatives, and can hardly be expected to cope with the evil of a century when enough unto the day is the evil thereof.

But England's Utopia is at her door. She has only to send some one out and seize it and rig up the Union Jack. It is more profitable than ice-flows, paddy-fields or sandy wastes.

What is this Utopia, and how shall it be reached? A few sharp consistent strokes of policy will take us there, provided that the House has the will-to-do and the soul-to-dare. Industry must be restored to the soil, and the soil restored to its universal place or pre-eminence. There is no need to nationalise the one or the other. Nationalisation is only a change of labels and does no conceivable good, and may do real harm. In stifling private initiative, for instance, a pushful fellow may be converted into a drone. If the lessons of *Régie* enterprises in Latin countries were not sufficient foretaste of failure before the war, the plight of nationalised industry in Russia teaches a sure enough lesson now.

As our Utopian advice to France with her depreciated currency was to burn up all her paper money, so our radical remedy for the economic ills of England is to break up the land. Once the land is fragmented it will go back to those to whom it most belongs, and a stout healthy English yeomanry will emerge from

the collapse of the landed aristocracy of the day. Thus the decay of agricultural families will be automatically stopped.

But that is not enough. Work on land should be given pride of place. Let every apprentice in a factory, in fact every factory hand, be drawn from such a reconstituted agricultural family. Let him serve at least three years on the soil before he is taken into a factory. And let the term of labour in a factory not exceed a fixed period of years at a stretch.

Such interwelding of industry and agriculture is not a flight of fancy, but an economic necessity for England, circumstanced as she now is.

The industrialist may object: Why do you take away my best people when they are learning to be dexterous at their jobs?

Our answer is very simple: If a state can enforce conscription and call up every able-bodied male for three years' military service with the colours, surely that state can still more easily enforce a like period of private service on the soil. It may be argued that the *military* needs are paramount. Equally and more emphatically, we urge that the *vital* needs are still more paramount. The former subserve only the material side of national life; the latter, the conservation and improvement of the nation and all that life stands for. These two vital needs of the nation are at present wholly neglected. Labour, especially factory labour, has got to be spiritualised, or, if you prefer the term, de-materialised. This will not be achieved by wandering priests or peripatetic cinema-men, or by garden-colonies, or by excursions into the country or seaside, or by university extension lectures, or by addresses from statesmen however eminent.

No. *The only spiritualising force in the land is the land.*

Let each machine-made worker realise that he can escape to the land not for a few hours, no, but for a few years, and then he will thrill with a feeling of love for that hitherto elusive and unknown being "Mother England." There is not a Frenchman but thrills with love for "La Douce Franc," which to him is a cottage standing on a bit of land, where he can grow his whole dinner from meat to cheese. An Italian returns after long years of hard, foreign labour to his native country, and there he spends the evening of his life on the soil. Let the English worker also feel that he is not an alien in England. He does not want arbitration boards, but the land of his birth.

Honourable members of the House of Commons have to disengage their minds from such cobwebs as restricted output, shorter hours, living wage, etc., etc., and go down to bedrock as has been shown above. When the law assured them shorter hours and day labour, the bakers of Paris in solemn meeting assembled, entered a spirited protest, and demanded relief from enforced idleness, contending that they were not babies to be put to bed with the setting of the sun. Bakers are not orators, but the sight of these toilers of the night, kneading the air in angry gesture as they argued for liberty of labour, carried more conviction than mere words. Other fallacies are equally flimsy. No; the House of Commons cannot be a real House of Commons so long as its distinguished members do not cudgel their brains and tackle deep-seated problems at the root itself, instead of playing upon their surface-effects in futile triumphs of suavity.

And **Germany?** Is there anywhere on this planet a Utopia for Germany? If so, where?

If Austria was a geographical concept, Germany is a tribal fetish: so said and say their detractors. Perhaps they have a semblance of reason. Germany's best rallying cries, miscalled songs, go back to tribal epochs:

Als der Römer, frech geworden, sim serim sim sim sim sim.

Germany is also a land of philosophers, who have continued a quest for their philosopher's stone, in the shape of eternal peace. Kant, the expert on *Pure Reason*, explored all the paths to eternal peace. His brochure on the subject is very dreary reading, but in his peculiarly labyrinthine style he writes with an air of masterly finality. Had he lived long enough he would have realised that there is a recipe for eternal peace, not to be found in his philosopher's wallet.

Germany has found it to-day. It consists of three D's: Defeat; Disarmament; Drudgery.

It is a sublime irony of fate that Germany which before the war was the *nec plus ultra*, the *dernier cri*, in efficient administration, should now be regarded and treated as an excrescence on Europe, classable with mandated territory in the wilds of Africa or in the solitudes of the South Seas. This acute contrast is apt to be overlooked in a hurry. Before 1914 eminent statesmen were proud to claim Germany as their spiritual home, and now "lies she there, and none so poor to do her reverence." Before the war German arts and crafts, science and philosophy held a place of unchallenged pre-eminence in the regard of the world. Now the repute of German learning is so low that an aspirant to a minor French diploma has to suppress

the fact that he is a German Doctor. International conferences in medicine and radiology, aeronautics and technology sit in solemn silence with wisecracks hailing from remote and backward parts of the globe, while Germany which once peremptorily claimed a place in the sun is deemed to have forfeited her usual place on this earth. Prejudices die hard, especially those based on propaganda.

Within an iron ring of prejudice, swelled by propaganda, Germany is realising Utopia, a Utopia of her own, which none may dispute with her. It rests on a tripod of three D's, the D's of Defeat, Disarmament, Drudgery. What are they?

Before 1914, the Imperial War Museum in Berlin was a-glitter with trophies of the last three European wars. To-day, it is gaunt and desolate except for a few antiques. That is Defeat.

Before 1914, the German uniform excited the veneration of the old and the envy of the young, and the adulation of the fair sex. To-day it provokes derisive reproach. That is Defeat.

Before 1914, a single German Schutzmann equipped with *pickelhaube*, cutlass and revolver, kept the peace in a whole quarter from the crossing of its two central roads, such was his unchallenged prestige. To-day that prestige has sunk so low that communistically minded workmen break the peace where and how they please, under the very eyes of a pale-faced, hollow-chested, dispirited flunkeydom miscalled gendarmerie. That is Defeat.

The second element in Germany's eternal peace is Disarmament. This, too, is an accomplished fact, like defeat.

German nationals are driven out of ex-German territory, re-arranged as internationalised cities, plebiscite areas, Polish corridors, etc., by snarling little nationalities, wreaking a long-deferred vengeance on the colossus lying helpless at their feet, and Germany may not even show her teeth in resentment. She has no teeth. They have all been drawn. That is Disarmament.

If Russia's Guardians of the Revolution—quaint and misleading title for Red soldiery intended to be flung against neighbouring states—were to pour across the Polish corridor into Germany in order to bring her back from the idylls of Locarno and Geneva to a closer view of and contact with Soviet Realities, why, then, like any defenceless maid of romance, Dame Germania would have to seek effective shelter only behind the exiguous plumage of the Gallic Cock or the shaggy mane of the British Lion. That is Disarmament.

The third, last and greatest element in eternal peace is Drudgery, and in this Germans are expert. The submissive thoroughness with which they toiled or toil for Imperial or Alien exploiters has not changed with the fortunes of war. Instances have been cited before the Reichstag which deserve much wider publicity. The Ruhr miner worked better for the French generalissimo than for the German Stinnes. German Railways are running on gold wheels under an alienised directorate. French judges in occupied territory dispense sounder justice than German judges. Vaterlandless, unnatural, unnational, Marxist wretches, co-operating with the occupier of Occupied Territory have rendered better service to Germany than all the

deputies in the Reichstag, chattering like monkeys in a cage; etc., etc.

This is no mandated or backward land in Asia, Polynesia or Africa with a lack of ambition and national feeling. No. It is industrious, muddleheaded Germany. From day to day, in patient, profitless toil, she vegetates. Fear of war may grip other lands; Germany has won "Eternal Peace" undreamt of in the philosophy of Kant. Is that Utopia?

— Not altogether. Clad lightly and poorly, hatless on principle, Germany's young and old saunter forth like *Wandervogel* or the ancient "*Fahrender Scholast*" in order to seek in communion with nature an inner peace which her outer tranquillity does not give. Such outbursts are a denial of the present, a reversion to the past. Never was such spiritual energy manifest in pre-war Germany. Propagandist organisations have tried to harness that energy to their own political ideals or programmes.

The "Steel Helm" has had most conspicuous success. It out-Fascists the Fascist; shames the Chauvin; makes pale the Jingo. It has all the secret strength of young K. K. K., with none of its cabal and tomfoolery.

Republican organisations are lifeless lepers in their own land. Their post-bag delivers them insulting letters. When, after the model of the "Steel Helm," they undertake a propaganda tour in a village, they are either denied ordinary hospitality, or received with offal and refuse.

Communist organisations like the "Red Flag" gesticulate, vociferate, perorate in public parks and commons. They exchange invective or even blows with inoffensive police or pugnacious rivals. But their

histrionic efforts have no effect on the inner situation. Germany's continued drift away from Soviet Russia, into the arms of England and France, is an effective index of the impotence of communism.

It is a curious paradox and sad commentary on our political unwisdom that the republic, which should be a welcome half-way house between monarchism and communism, a meeting-ground for extremists from either wing of the Reichstag, should become its whipping-boy, and bear the execration of all. Perhaps the republic is only a sign-post, a bauble, a sham—tolerated by all because it gives them a like chance for preparing the next *putsch* or *coup*, be it monarchist or spartacist. Hotheads and partisans do not worry about the republic; the republic itself dare not worry them. "Truth-seekers," taking their cue from ex-royalty in their midst, are undermining it unconsciously; the republic dare not show them over the border. Internationalists have no use for the republic, nor has the republic any use for them.

Decidedly Germany's Utopia is anywhere except in her republic. More probably it is undiluted monarchism, a mirage of which floats with captivating clearness before her eyes. Less probably it is Sovietism, because its chances under the pressure of England and France, applied through Locarnos and Genevas, have become increasingly remote. But, all exceptions taken and all reservations made, Germany was happier under monarchism. Her Reichstag, despite the fiery denunciation which crepitates on its benches, or on that very ground, provides a safety-valve for mutual animosities. It has no duty by the people. The parties are educating the people themselves, and preparing them for the final clash.

And **Italy**, *Italia Vincitrice e Vinta*,—where shall we seek her Utopia? In the Pantheon? In the Colosseum? In the Spielberg? In Caporetto? Or does it lie in a bundle of twigs?

Just as England is the land of Problems, Italy is a complex of queer Conundrums. Here are a few agitating the public mind and conscience in Italy:

1. When is an Italian no Italian?
2. Shall the state exist for the individual, or the individual for the state?
3. Is an Italian living in foreign lands a foreigner?
4. Is the foreigner preaching universal brotherhood on Italian soil an anarchist? Shall he be locked up or kicked out?
5. Shall opposition be crushed down by force, or assimilated into Fascism by gentleness?
6. Which is better—Universal brotherhood or Fascist fraternity? And finally:
7. Shall the Fascist state exist for the Fascist citizen only?

The Fascists claim to answer all these conundrums in deeds, not words, by converting Italy into an out-and-out Fascist state. When every citizen, every civil servant, every workman, every peasant, is a Fascist, then there will be no opposition, no internationalists, no demo-liberals, nothing but unalloyed Fascism.

Fascism has great expectations from the Italian citizen, but to give the devil his due, Fascism has conferred on the Italian citizen certain advantages which show up by contrast with other countries in Europe.

Firstly, freedom from industrial troubles is a positive gain:

This freedom has been acquired at a price, it must be admitted, but how far it is a genuine gain will appear if the relative economic chaos in England and France is taken into consideration. In England the big public services threaten to strangle the very life of the nation, merely out of sympathy or solidarity with any subaltern class of workers who may choose to exploit their masters' difficulties, and convert a necessity for a cut in wages for a call for all brother proletarians to "Down Tools Everywhere!" That is the solidarity of labour and if it is to be upheld with full logic and on every occasion, labour will be left without a single, full, working-day in its calendar, and cease to be labour at all! What will it be then? So far as past experience shows and present tendencies go, labour will be, wholly or partially, put on the dole, and the tax-payer will be paying labour for not doing its duty by him! We have called England a "land of sour paradoxes." That is one of the sourest.

And France is not behind England in economic indiscipline. An essential Government service indulges in a one-hour strike or sabotage in the busiest hours of a Monday morning, and all ramifications of public and private activity from the wars in Syria and Morocco to quotations on the Bourse pay the price of a few civil servants' levity in their own loss or suffering or worse. And these few Government servants who throw the working of a big Government service out of gear have not been traced to this day. Indiscipline could no further go.

Again, worsted in the *Chambre*, a political party throws the whole country into the convulsions of a general 24 hours' general strike of protest against one

thing or another. *L'appétit vient en mangeant.* It may be for 24 hours to-day, and for 24 days to-morrow. Success or failure is a minor point. The fearsome aspect of the situation is the certainty of an economic stranglehold which may be applied at any time. That certainty alone will be sufficient to stagger credit at home, and to shatter credit abroad, and the paper franc will go hurtling through tens and hundreds into the limbo of the paper rouble, crown and mark.

Fascist Italy has been spared economic chaos, and that is the first positive gain.

Equally noteworthy is the strengthening of the political situation. The Fascist may be right or wrong. There may be as little stuff in his moonshine theories as in communist miasmas, but the Fascist is a man of flesh and blood, inspired by a principle and acting up to that principle. Such a one is preferable to the chamberfuls of jellyfishes and limpets who pullulate elsewhere. Europe minus Italy is a *nightscape* politically.

Indecision, leading to loss of principle and breach of faith has been the ruin of conservatism, liberalism, radicalism, socialism. It is easy to be strong in opposition; it is difficult to be strong in power. The path of democracy is strewn with broken principles and bleeding hearts. Of all political parties in Europe, the Fascists alone are stronger in power than in opposition. They do no lip-service to democracy. Except in that horrid hybrid "Demo-liberalism" they do not even recognise that term. They have acquired a giant's strength, and they use it like a giant, tyrannously. Their justification is their predecessors' failure; their excuse, their predecessors' misdeeds; their final triumph, their predecessors' complete undoing.

A third boon which Fascism claims to be conferring on Italy is a healthier public administration. We are asked to admit at the outset that there cannot exist such a monster on earth as an unpolitical public servant. Such a one, if at all unpolitical, is a prey to all political parties, a focus of intolerable intrigue. He is a child of caprice in his weaker moments, and a slave of passion in his stronger. If weak, he is misery to himself; if strong, an irritant to the public. And in either case, he is a danger to public, self and state.

The Fascists are making the prime qualifying condition of entry into public service, Fascism. Obviously, a Fascist state must have Fascist servants. This makes discipline good. For, it is easier to deal with a troop of trained soldiers than with a mob of heterogenous opinion-holders. As a penalty for indiscipline in his charge the Fascist prefect of Florence had to go, regardless of a blameless record and consternation in the land. Discipline is discipline, and must be the same for all Bumbledom from Zabern to Shanghai.

A step in the same direction is to replace amorphous local councils with governors and *podestas*, on the assumption that the whole country is going Fascist.

Fascism, so constituted, so interpreted, so administered, cannot last for ever. It cannot even last for a day. For the day the entire country turns Fascist, there will be no further Fascism left in the land. Fascism will then have become the lowest common denominator for all, the jumping-off place for newer and better and higher things. What other parties will then spring into existence by fission or agglomeration cannot be foreseen, nor is it worth foreseeing. Boon

or evil, Fascism carries within itself the germs of its own decay. Tyranny in little homœopathic doses may put it off; tyranny in wrong doses may accelerate it. But the twentieth century is not prepared to accept undiluted tyranny for long. The plain average citizen is no less a bourgeois in Italy than elsewhere. Fascist swashbucklers may amuse him to-day, annoy him to-morrow, but he will not stand perpetual subjection to Fascist ideals. Ideals are like leaven, you cannot live upon them exclusively. The militarist cannot live all his life in jackboots; nor the worker in his claybox of factory on clammy margarine and pumped air; still less can the Fascist live continuously on a bundle of twigs.

Life, to be worth living while you have it, must be easy, simple, natural. That holds everywhere, and still more forcibly in Italy where Life is Art, which cannot be disciplined or dragooned or doped for the benefit of any state. There is a future for democracy in Italy, in the hearts of men, even if to-day democracy is on the wheel.

EPILOGUE.

Europe's Parliaments are everywhere in chains—of their own forging, or others' imposing. They have, in a deep sense, ceased to function without friction or restraint.

Each leading country, as we have seen in the foregoing exposition, possesses the means and the possibility of making the most of its parliament, and of ensuring that it does its duty by the people. This clear duty is apt to be overlooked in the welter of false issues,

which shortsighted deputies are tempted to raise in order to secure transient triumphs at one another's expense, even at the country's expense.

No parliament is perfect. But all are perfectible

FINIS.

